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Acknowledgements

As the deadline is approaching and I am running out of time, yet don't want to simply copy and paste my first thesis's acknowledgements, I will try to keep things short this time around.

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My family has been supportive throughout my entire life and made it possible for me to follow and complete both my *Geschichte* and *Politikwissenschaft* studies. I cannot thank my parents, Martin and Viviane Spiegel, enough for their help and for always being there. I also want to thank Rudolf and Susanne Ruthensteiner, Anna Spiegel and the late Maria Spiegel, and everyone else in the family. Special thanks go out to my utterly delightful siblings, Adrian and Julia Spiegel: having hoped to include particularly unique greetings to them in my first thesis, I ended up forgetting to do so due to deadline stress. Busy as everything is, I am not sure this is the time to spend thinking up particularly unique imagery of gratitude for them; thus, I'll merely leave a quick "thanks" here, while hamsters in insect-like rocketships circle the sun, singing their praises in ecstatic disharmony as confused pyramids map the space ways.

Once again, deepest thanks go out to all my interviewees for taking the time to contribute to my theses. Numerous friendships have developed from these 2009 meetings which continue to resonate beyond their immediate academic context. I am also glad to have wonderfully generous and kind friends here in Vienna, as well as elsewhere, not least in the US – ones I have known for a long time and once I only encountered recently: you know who you are. Thank you!

0 Intro

Politics and American 'Free Folk' music(s) is a stand-alone diploma thesis that is, nonetheless, also a follow up to an earlier paper, *Gender construction and American 'Free Folk' music(s)*. While familiarity with the first paper, whose research concerned more basic levels of psychedelic underground music scenes' constitution, is recommended to those interested in the topic, it isn't required. With historical contextualization in mind, the new text asks: what are political potentials in such local, trans-local and virtual scenes? Cultural-historical contextualization and comparison supports these acts of tracing.

Chapter 1 will examine the relationship between my two theses and introduce my own trajectory for the sake of greater traceability.

Chapter 2 will present my new paper's theoretical, contextual and methodological framework – an updated take on my first thesis's.

Chapter 3 will apply lessons learned from Branden W. Joseph's investigation of Tony Conrad's 'minor' trajectory to a historicization of these scenes and to a survey of some of its modes of engagement with power relations.

Chapter 4 moves from Nadya Zimmerman's critique of the San Francisco counterculture to a deepening of my understanding of improvisational and psychedelic elements in these scenes as well as an interrogation of these musics' relations to contemporary capitalism.

Chapter 5, given impulse by Mark Gridley's disarticulation of free jazz from the civil rights movement as well as criticism of his approach, asks how interviewed musicians' own takes on politics in these scenes may be approached historiographically, and what they imply for such underground musics' political potency.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion, summarizing the thesis's various strands and hinting at potential future moves in my attempted cartography of these heterogeneous and dynamic musical-social fields.

1 Impetus

In order to assure and increase my own project's traceability, I want to start by situating this paper on my personal trajectory and within the greater research project it is a part of. In this chapter, I will discuss these aspects as well as my thoughts on the thesis's potentials and limitations, thus offering contextual knowledge and disclaimers that should diversify as well as clarify the reading experience.

1.1 Theses

In January 2012, I finished my *Politikwissenschaft* (political science) diploma thesis, *Gender construction and American 'Free Folk' music(s)*[1], work on which had commenced three years earlier. Throughout 2009, 2010 and 2011, this project had been on my mind nigh constantly, even in those manifold phases that saw actual, or easily quantifiable, work (especially that of interview transcription) come to a standstill. The *Politikwissenschaft* diploma curriculum was scheduled and legally required to run out in April 2012, making April 30 the last possible day for students to finish their diploma studies so as not to be transferred to the new Bachelor / Master systems. Somewhat characteristically, I handed in my paper only a few days (January 27) before the official deadline (January 31). The *Geschichte* (history) diploma plan is scheduled to run out in April 2013. Consequently, the deadline for *Geschichte* diploma thesis submissions is set to January 31, 2013. These deadlines and the resulting pressures certainly had and have an (arguably beneficial) impact on my own schedule organization and work discipline. What is, however, more important at this moment is the impact they had and have on the actual manifestations of my research work – more so on this new *Geschichte* thesis, in fact. This results in a variety of challenges: less time and space are available for this new paper.

Gender construction felt like a culmination or synthesis of not just the three years I had spent working on (or at least contemplating) it but of many years of musical and theoretical interests (also see chapter 1.2). While many of these interests, thoughts and impulses were genuinely articulated only while working on this project, I believe the longevity and intensity of some of these interests were crucial for the thesis's density

[1] Spiegel, Maximilian Georg: *Gender construction and American 'Free Folk' music(s)* (diploma thesis, Wien 2012). The thesis is available for download on the Universität Wien's E-Theses site: http://othes.univie.ac.at/18384/. Last accessed: October 16, 2012.

and relative expansiveness. Arguably the most important part of my thesis work, the one shaping the final text's character and structure the most, was the conduct of 22 qualitative interviews (also see chapter 2.3). Not only did they turn out as good as or better than I could have expected, considering I lacked actual interviewing practice before this project, but they were extremely motivational in themselves, not least due to the interviewees' openness, interest and insightful narratives and views. They also yielded an amount of material that probably far exceeds that required for an average diploma thesis. It was this material that I focused on in *Gender construction*, mostly tracing the musical-social fields in question along its lines, contextualizing it, connecting it and applying ideas from other literature. The resulting text was adequately and almost surprisingly web-like. It could be no complete, 'objective', final depiction of the local, trans-local and virtual scenes (see chapter 2.2) in question, dynamic and heterogeneous as they are. It did, however, present a model of how to discuss these scenes, conceptualized first and foremost through the social relations constituting them, without reducing them to the presence of single scene signifiers or to supposedly homogeneous aesthetics. It discussed the many ways in which gender (conceptualized as multiply relational[2] and not essential) is constituted in and helps constitute these social relations, resorting not to the discussion or creation of one specific meaning and manifestation of 'gender' in the field of research but also trying to point out emancipatory potentialities, their actualizations and blockings beyond the individual level.

The interview material, recordings amounting to dozens of hours and, in transcribed form, hundreds of pages, was not used in its entirety (as constituted through my work and perceived contingently by me), although its entirety certainly fed into the thesis. Only certain parts of interviewees' narratives were used explicitly, but the rest served as context that required contemplation and reflection and was at least implicitly present in narratives' or individual quotes' use. In addition to the narratives' unused parts and otherwise not explicitly used interview material (see chapter 2.3 for information on the interviews' structures), quite a large number of other artifacts – articles, others' interviews, reviews – related to these scenes went unused. Consequently, it appeared perfectly possible to immediately follow *Gender construction* with a thesis posing different questions while researching and tracing the same field.

[2] cf. Griesebner, Andrea: *Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft. Eine Einführung* (Wien 2005), 153–158.

On my *Politikwissenschaft* thesis's last few pages, I discussed a variety of "future prospects" [3], also previewing a potential *Geschichte* thesis that would have discussed these scenes in their historicity. The thesis I am writing now could be considered a combination of two suggestions: my own idea to analyze these scenes' historicity, and my supervisor's suggestion (based on my earlier thesis's expansiveness and completeness and the difficulties these might pose for a parallel thesis) related to questions of music and politics in the USA in the 20th century. It received its current structure in midsummer 2012: three chapters (one per month: October, November, December – a schedule that ultimately failed), each applying theoretical and / or political aspects of a key text, dealing in one way or another with a (historical / historicized) related musical-social field's politics, to the music scenes I have been researching, or at least inspiring specified interrogation thereof. By choosing key texts that deal with different aspects of politics, political activity, political thought and the politics of aesthetics, I want to construct a standalone *Geschichte* thesis, flesh out certain aspects of my *Politikwissenschaft* text and contribute to a greater project of mapping / tracing these scenes that I hope to continue by writing a PhD thesis, starting in 2013 or 2014.

Politics were already discussed to some extent in *Gender construction*, especially in my subchapter on "Gender / Politics / Gender Politics"[4]. However, this was a relatively short subchapter, and while some of its themes will be continued here, my new thesis goes into greater detail, has amassed new material and generally constructs a different context for these themes. I introduced *Gender construction* as "an exploratory attempt at mapping and tracing an interconnected set of heterogeneous music scenes […] and the role of gender […] through the conduct and analysis of interviews."[5] This statement of intent had been preceded by a quote taken from a text by Paola Marrati, who argues that

> [t]he freedom of thinking thus consists in the elaboration of problematic fields, and it depends on a critical attitude towards what is given, on our ability to experiment, to open up the limits of that which presents itself as necessary.[6]

This quote announces my first thesis's exploratory character, one that this new thesis arguably shares on a different level. As the paper I am writing now is supposed to be

[3] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 207–209.
[4] cf. ibid., 181–188.
[5] Ibid., 6.
[6] Marrati, Paola: Time and Affects. Deleuze on Gender and Sexual Difference, in: *Australian Feminist Studies* 21, 51 (2006), 313.

shorter and less ambitious than *Gender construction*, thus allowing for its timely submission, it is less expansively and obviously exploratory a paper. There are no new full interviews and USA research journeys. The territory appears, for now, established; it will be necessary to not believe it truly is, even though the compilation of material for this paper appears easier and less extensive. I am mostly working with material that's at hand already or that is easy to collect online or in libraries. The ratio between time spent reading interviews I have conducted and time spent reading others' books and articles probably differs to the earlier thesis's. At the same time, Marrati's wish "to open up the limits of that which presents itself as necessary" is just as relevant to this thesis. In any of the following chapters, assumptions – my own and others' – will have to be questioned and reflected on. A similar dialectic already granted *Gender construction* greater complexity. At times, this may lead to speculative claims. I try to keep those at bay while not forgetting that sometimes, speculation can be beneficial according to context and already generated knowledge.[7]

In the end, it is safe to say that there are noticeable differences in ambition between my two theses. While my first thesis staked out the field of research, my second one will not repeat or continue such a process in extensive form, although any idea, any micro-tracing certainly adds to the necessarily fragile and unpredictable cartography of these constantly shifting musical-social fields. It would also be disingenuous to claim that, having already written such an expansive first thesis, my own level of motivation equals that felt during *Gender construction*'s creation: at this point, being able to embark on a larger (PhD) project in the same field of research is what I would like to do best. And yet, I am aware that my history studies, too, require formal closure and hope that my new paper will serve as a valuable contribution to my own project (and maybe those of others). At the very least, once the thesis will have been completed, my (and, again, maybe and hopefully others') understanding of these scenes will have improved and deepened, and unique ideas and conceptualizations will have been spread. What cannot change is the basis of research and writing of both theses: the interviews I have conducted remain central. Thus, the closer my writing remains to the interviews' focus on social relations, the more strongly grounded and cohesive it will be. Even in those moments that will see me engage with questions of aesthetics and artistic practice (and these arguably have greater weight here than in my *Gender construction* paper), I will

[7] cf. Grossberg, Lawrence: *We Gotta Get out of This Place. Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York / London 1992), 1, 13.

attempt to connect to and trace the implications of the social. Thus, of course a certain, potentially dangerous, primacy of the social is established in this thesis. I think this focus is well-founded[8], but it is important to know and to state that this thesis is unable to tell these scenes' whole, let alone objective, story.

These two theses will intersect on a variety of levels. Sometimes, they will diverge from each other. Occasionally, they might appear to contradict each other in approach or even content; it will be my job to point out and analyze / contextualize these contradictions, or maybe expose them as being not actually contradictory. Some subchapters will deal with topics that *Gender construction* hardly touched upon. Others will be built on and deepen already established insights and conjectures, usually with the help of sets of literature not yet or hardly used in the earlier thesis. The former will be more able to rely on second-order tracings, increasing the risks (but, hopefully, also offering potential benefits of) speculation. Deleuze and Guattari write that "*the tracing should always be put back on the map*"[9] (see chapter 2.1), and this will be more necessary here than ever. Often, these tracings will simply serve as impulses or blueprints for later, more expansive research and analysis. A lot of the elaborations and conclusions you will read in this paper will be necessarily fragmentary and tentative, but I hope this won't lessen the overall quality. Rather, I hope that this thesis will fulfill expectations adequate to its context of production and its experimental / mildly exploratory approach. I hope that it will be received and perceived in its specificity but that it will open up or make obvious further paths of debate and further research.[10]

1.2 Listening / Studying / Writing

To make my research more traceable and to make its assumptions, questions, methods and conclusion easier to understand, I started *Gender construction* by discussing[11] my own interests' development as they fed into the project. Closely related as these theses are, that discussion, mostly written in 2011, is still of relevance; at the same time, I want

[8] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 40–55, 78, 171–172.
[9] Deleuze, Gilles / Guattari, Félix: *A Thousand Plateus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London / New York 2004), 14. (Emphasis in the original text).
[10] cf. Joseph, Branden W.: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York 2008), 9. Joseph offers a similar conceptualization of his own expectations for his work: "The result, which I have termed a 'minor history' for reasons explained in Chapter 1, is nonetheless offered in a spirit of speculation, meant to distance, trouble, and hopefully open up new avenues of study without replacing or shutting down the many other productive investigations of the period and its protagonists." Also see Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 13, 63.
[11] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 8–15.

to avoid overly repeating myself here. I thus want to sum up said thoughts and comment on them here.

On the level of personal musical interests, I narrated that I first started following these psychedelic / drone / noise musics around 2004 when I found out about Bardo Pond, a heavily psychedelic band from Philadelphia, who were praised by Mogwai, one of my own favorite bands at the time. Other acts I discovered soon (mostly through online sources, notably music webzines, articles published in some of which are quoted and commented on in this thesis) close to Bardo Pond included Charalambides, whose *Joy Shapes* (2004) I feel had a remarkable impact on my listening habits, and Fursaxa. With Christina Carter and Heather Leigh Murray (both also of Scorces), one constant and one former Charalambides member were among the interviewed for *Gender construction*, as was Tara Burke (Fursaxa). In 2006, Bardo Pond, Charalambides and Fursaxa played the Terrastock 6[12] festival in Providence, Rhode Island, then the latest in a series of influential festivals[13] emerging from the scenes surrounding British magazine *The Ptolemaic Terrascope*. The magazine's editor, Phil McMullen, was the project's first interviewee in 2009. Terrastock Six curator Jeffrey Alexander was later interviewed alongside his partner and collaborator in Black Forest / Black Sea and Secret Eye Records, Miriam Goldberg. Two other interviewees, Samara Lubelski and Matt Valentine, also played the festival as members of MV & EE with the Bummer Road, while another one, Chris Moon, was in attendance and active in the merchandise room. Later that year, I attended a British festival curated by Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth, ATP: The Nightmare Before Christmas[14]. Here again, Bardo Pond, Charalambides, Fursaxa (joined by Black Forest / Black Sea) and MV & EE with the Bummer Road performed, as did Heather Leigh Murray (alongside partner and fellow interviewee David Keenan in Taurpis Tula). Four other interviewees – Spencer Clark (The Skaters), Pete Nolan (Magik Markers), Eva Saelens (Inca Ore) and Ron Schneiderman (Sunburned Hand Of The Man) – were on stage at this memorable festival in Minehead, Somerset; Phil McMullen was in the audience. While my selection of interviewees wasn't entirely predetermined by these festival visits, said experiences certainly

[12] Terrastock 6, in: *Terrascope*. http://www.terrascope.co.uk/TerrastockPages/terrastock6DP.html. Last accessed: January 2, 2012.
[13] cf. Spiegel: Gender construction, 159–160; Leech, Jeanette: *Seasons They Change. The Story of Acid and Psychedelic Folk* (London 2010), 241–242, 281.
[14] Nightmare Before Christmas curated by Thurston Moore, in: *All Tomorrow's Parties*. http://www.atpfestival.com/events/nightmare2006.php. Last accessed: January 2, 2012.

impacted my own perception of these scenes. At both festivals, I met people in person whom I had encountered on a Radiohead fansite's music message board[15]. The same year, Keenan's and Murray's store and online mailorder Volcanic Tongue[16] had become an important source for me, introducing me to and supplying me with often rare releases by musicians from these and related fields. My interest in and research into the musics discussed in my theses was very much predicated on virtual connections and communication.

Somewhat oddly, my taste narrative as recounted in *Gender construction* doesn't extend far beyond 2006, apart from a mention of my purchase of a turntable in 2008. While no shifts in interest or phases of discovery since appear to equal those that got me into the music of Charalambides and their peers, that version of the story neglects a certain broadening of my musical interest. This opening-up (especially towards more electronics-based musics and pop forms) might be implied in certain discussions present in *Gender construction* and appears to parallel certain artists' and labels' development, like that of Not Not Fun, the label run by Amanda and (interviewee) Britt Brown. Still, more explicit discussion would have been interesting and would have had to include a number of webzines: in addition to, or sometimes replacing, ones that were already present in 2006 (*fakejazz*[17], *Brainwashed*[18], *Tiny Mix Tapes*[19], *Pitchfork*[20], all listed in my earlier thesis's equivalent section), others like *Dusted*[21], *FACT*[22] or *Foxy Digitalis*[23] should be mentioned here, as should mailorder / download store Boomkat[24]. I also spent some time on the *Fangs & Arrows*[25] message board, which deals mostly in such Do It Yourself (DIY) drone / noise / psychedelic musics, but my message board activities have been decreasing over the years.

Another odd omission from the earlier paper's "Impetus" chapter was *The Wire*, a magazine that I subscribed to in that apparently crucial year 2006. Articles from the magazine, especially David Keenan's 2003 "New Weird America" cover story on

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[15] music - *ateaseweb.com*. http://board.ateaseweb.com//index.php?showforum=44. Last accessed: May 25, 2011.
[16] *Volcanic Tongue*: Underground Music Mailorder & Shop. http://www.volcanictongue.com/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[17] *fakejazz*. http://www.fakejazz.info/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[18] *Brainwashed*. http://www.brainwashed.com/. Last accessed: May 25, 2011.
[19] *Tiny Mix Tapes*. http://www.tinymixtapes.com/. Last accessed: May 25, 2011.
[20] *Pitchfork*. http://pitchfork.com/. Last accessed: May 25, 2011.
[21] *Dusted Magazine*. http://www.dustedmagazine.com/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[22] *FACT Magazine*: Music News, New Music. http://www.factmag.com/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[23] *Foxy Digitalis*. http://www.foxydigitalis.com/foxyd/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[24] *Boomkat* - Your independent music specialist. http://boomkat.com/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[25] *Fangs & Arrows*. http://fangsandarrows.com/. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.

"Sunburned Hand Of The Man and the free folk explosion"[26], were discussed in *Gender construction*, and more will be discussed here. Alongside Keenan, another interviewee – Britt Brown – is writing for *The Wire* these days; some of his writing will be quoted as well. *The Wire*'s position as a widely distributed and eclectic journal on experimental musics is rather unique, and while it has its detractors and certainly isn't perfect to my mind either[27], its very existence sometimes seems surprising and, I feel, is something to be cherished. Its exact impact on my listening habits are hard to determine, but it probably has been more present to me over the last years than any other music publication, not least due to its wide distribution and easy availability. For now, it is thus a much more heavily-used source of thesis material than 'smaller' US-based zines, an imbalance that I will only be able to correct over the course of more extensive, later projects of mine.

I spent my university year 2007 / 08 attending classes at University College Dublin, Ireland. This was a time of enthusiastic concert attendance, in Dublin as well as in the UK (Glasgow, London), although it was only near the end of my stay that I started truly getting into contact with the local artists related to the American ones I would go on to interview. The openness that I probably lacked or failed to realize around that time and that was necessary for (and helped by) my diploma thesis did, however, grow and help me become a bit more involved in Viennese underground musics over the last few years, especially through my continuous attempt at maintaining a concert calendar and listings service[28] and through contact with friends active in these internationalized DIY networks (not least including interviewee Eric Arn). The experiences lived while working on *Gender construction* certainly added to all this while also impacting on my listening habits (for example, I have been listening to far more music by Sunburned Hand Of The Man and the Jewelled Antler Collective since).

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[26] Keenan, David: The Fire Down Below, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 234 (August 2003), 34–41. The quotes are taken from the magazine's cover.

[27] For example, there has been a noticeable gender imbalance to the magazine's coverage – see Barry, Aoife: What the Boys Said: Gender (Im)balance in Music Magazines, in: *The Anti Room* (November 16, 2010). http://www.theantiroom.com/2010/11/16/what-the-boys-said-gender-imbalance-in-music-magazines/. Last accessed: January 21, 2013. In 2005, Diedrich Diederichsen, while lauding *The Wire*'s up to date character, argues that its feuilleton, due to theoretical shortcomings, fails to do justice to the music's "*Brisanz*", its explosive actuality: Diederichsen, Diedrich: Schreiben im Musikzimmer, in: *Musikzimmer. Avantgarde und Alltag* (Köln 2005), 23.

[28] Aural Chance Meetings under the Viennese Moon, in: *last.fm*. http://www.last.fm/group/Aural+Chance+Meetings+under+the+Viennese+Moon. Last accessed: January 21, 2013.

Regarding the academic level (which has become increasingly indistinguishable from the rest), I want to point out, as I did in *Gender construction*, that the interdisciplinary module *Kulturwissenschaften* / Cultural Studies, chosen as an elective field of concentration for *Geschichte*, had enormous impact on my two main studies. So did gender theory courses attended in all three contexts. As a result, both theses appear closer to cultural studies than to my main studies' classic fields – or are taking some further steps towards a synthesis (that could be considered 'my own' but certainly is social on many levels), a type of minor cultural sociology (see chapter 2.1). My perspective on any interests of mine, not least these music scenes, is inseparable from my experiences at and around university. However, whereas *Gender construction* combined those interests that appeared strongest at the time (and possibly still do), this thesis's topic with its focus on politics and various forms thereof is a slightly less obvious choice. This isn't meant to imply that I am less interested in this new thesis's topic – just that it is less obvious an outcome of the preceding years' interests than *Gender construction* was (although neither outcome was predetermined). A lot of the literature that I am using to designate 'the political' is easily connectable to literature used in *Gender construction*. One of the steps I took to galvanize my ideas for this new thesis was to read Jeremy Gilbert's *Anticapitalism and Culture*[29] – Gilbert featured numerous times in *Gender construction* as I used shorter texts of his which will be referenced here yet again as they provide certain key impulses to the conceptualization of the scenes articulated and elaborated in my project. I believe that this new thesis's concerns have increasingly fed back into my own interests, that my work on these concerns has elevated my own interest therein – hopefully heralding a general increase in political awareness and activity on my part.

[29] Gilbert, Jeremy: *Anticapitalism and Culture. Radical Theory and Popular Politics* (Oxford / New York 2008).

2 The project thus far and now

A critical summary and explication of my *Politikwissenschaft* diploma thesis should provide an adequate introduction to my *Geschichte* diploma thesis's field of research, concerns, theoretical framework and methodology. Changes in theory and method have been rather minute and *Gender construction*'s own chapters on these were fairly extensive and exhaustive (especially the chapter on interview methodology) and I want to avoid repeating myself excessively. I will thus follow the earlier thesis's chapters' structure and content but will keep this new thesis's equivalents shorter, though not without including further reflections on the differences between the two texts where applicable.

2.1 Theory[30]

Gender construction, prioritizing the spatial over the temporal[31], may not have been a history thesis, but it took many of its chief cues from historians' or historiographically inspired texts.[32] Taking into consideration my own academic trajectory, this shouldn't come as a surprise: not only was *Geschichte* the field of study most of my friends would have predicted me to choose, but many of my initial and formative experiences in cultural studies took place in *Geschichte* courses.

One text whose indirect and, later, direct influence has been relevant to me for a large part of my university years is Michel Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History"[33]. In *Gender construction*, it served as an opening bracket laying out a variety of basic, implicitly anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist assumptions crucial to my understanding of how to write 'history' – or any other theme or field of study. Later, Angela McRobbie's more concrete "The Es and the Anti-Es"[34] helped me tie together the various approaches and ideas presented in *Gender construction*'s theory chapter and served as its closing bracket. (It should be added that my designation of these sections

[30] See Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 16–39 for a more exhaustive discussion of many of these approaches.
[31] cf. Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 25–27.
[32] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 207.
[33] Foucault, Michel: Nietzsche, Genealogy, History, in: Lawrence Cahoone (ed.): *From Modernism to Postmodernism. An Anthology* (Malden / Oxford / Carlton South / Berlin 2003), 241–252.
[34] McRobbie, Angela: The Es and the Anti-Es. New Questions for feminism and cultural studies, in: *Reitsamer, Rosa / Weinzierl, Rupert (eds.): Female Consequences. Feminismus, Antirassismus, Popmusik* (Wien 2006), 111–136.

as ‘theory’ is chiefly an analytical one, and not implying the existence of separate spheres of theory and praxis.)

In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”, Foucault channels Nietzsche (or numerous Nietzsches, as quotes are cited from and paraphrases refer to various phases of Nietzsche’s own writing, sometimes in comparison / juxtaposition) in order to forcefully present his own (Nietzschean) concept of genealogy. This is what Nietzsche also calls ‘*wirkliche Historie*’ (effective history), which is anti-teleological, anti-totalizing and aware of its own perspective. Genealogy

> must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history – in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. Finally, genealogy must define even those instances where they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized […].[35]

“[G]ray, meticulous, and patiently documentary”[36] genealogy requires vast amounts of material. Rather than *Ursprung* (origin: essential, metaphysical and truthful), it is interested in *Herkunft* (descent, which “allows the sorting out of different traits” [37], tracing heterogeneity) and *Entstehung* (emergence, for which “no one is responsible”: “it always occurs in the interstice”[38] when forces struggle).

Three “uses” of effective history are invoked against traditional forms of the discipline:

> The first is parodic, directed against reality, and opposes the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; the second is dissociative, directed against identity, and opposes history given as continuity or representative of a tradition; the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge.[39]

In my first thesis, I mostly dismissed the first use for my own work. Now, I cannot help wondering whether my mode of juxtaposing past scenes, in the limited form of specific key texts, and its limited invocation of ‘historic’ protagonists like La Monte Young or The Grateful Dead (I am consciously omitting the otherwise very present Tony Conrad here, for reasons that should become obvious later) isn’t an example of the type of history that such parody is aimed at. However, while none of these individual artists’ / groups’ portraits can be painted in much detail and in all the necessary complexity, I am

[35] Foucault: Nietzsche, Genealogy, History, 241–242.
[36] Ibid., 241.
[37] Ibid., 244.
[38] Ibid., 245.
[39] Ibid., 249.

trying to never posit them as archetypes for anything. Instead, I refer to individual traits, to specific descriptions and analyses and references on others' parts in order to arrive at a denser (and, hopefully, to some extent historically deepened) understanding of the heterogeneous and dynamic scenes whose cartography I am working on.

I encountered Christina Lutter and Markus Reisenleitner's article "Introducing History (in)to Cultural Studies"[40] years before reading "Nietzsche, History, Genealogy" for the first time, but it is especially through this text that lessons to be taken from Foucault were spread into my own practice. Lutter and Reisenleitner examine the potential intersections and mutual benefits of Cultural Studies (and *Kulturwissenschaften*) and history, especially in the German-speaking context. Their text is thus of specific interest as it is located at an intersection extremely relevant to my studies – but then, of course, it actually helped shape them. Theory and academic work – in the cases of both history and cultural studies – are themselves historicized and situated in terms of (not just academic) power relations. Cultural studies as a (heterogeneous) project / practice is outlined; among that characterization's central points is that cultural studies can be considered a "contextual theory" that "is interested in social relations and their effects. Cultural practices that produce meanings are taken as seriously as their economic and political contexts." Moments and mechanisms of empowerment and disempowerment are traced. Culture itself is not immutably defined but rather "manifest in the differentiations and mutual interactions of diverse cultural processes and practices in specific economic, social and political contexts."[41] Cultural studies' transdisciplinary approach makes its own point of view overt and questions notions of objectivity, thus also potentially undermining seemingly pre-given power relations.
Meanwhile, through their tracing of paradigm shifts in the study of history, Lutter and Reisenleitner report that the encountered

> interconnections between texts and contexts, and the abandonment of linear-temporal in favour of intertwined spatial structures, result in an infinite complexity in regard to possible questions and contexts as well as to the documents and sources available to elucidate them, a complexity which is impossible to handle empirically.[42]

[40] Lutter, Christina / Reisenleitner, Markus: Introducing History (in)to Cultural Studies: Some Remarks on the Germanspeaking Context, in: *Cultural Studies* 16, 5 (2002), 611–630.
[41] Ibid., 616.
[42] Ibid., 622.

It is the reflective selectivity necessitated by source material thus conceived that Lutter and Reisenleitner link to "a Foucauldian genealogy that does not intend to tell the/one history, but indicates the plurality of potential meanings."[43] "Position and perspective"[44] are crucial to their text, as it was to my own *Politikwissenschaft* paper – I named what could be considered the latter's 'theory' section "Contingency and perspectivity: towards a minor cultural sociology of gender"[45], designating an anti-essentialist and self-reflective approach. Historiographic practice that takes all this into account needn't indulge in arbitrariness but rather has to be ruthless in its transdisciplinary "specified investigations of historical contexts and contingencies". Concepts like Lynn Hunt's unstable, contingent 'meta-narratives' can be (temporarily) invoked so as to connect such investigations to "strategic political modes of intervention" [46].

Asking with Carolyn Steedman for history's potential role for cultural studies, Lutter and Reisenleitner hint at Meaghan Morris's *Too Soon Too Late. History in Popular Culture* and posit as "the very issue under discussion [in specific, historical contexts]: what *is* possible and *for whom*."[47] In my own framework, the Deleuzo-Spinozan question of what a body can do, rather than what a body is[48], comes into play here. I think this very question of *potentials* is crucial for this thesis: my question for politics, here, isn't so much about pointing out (party-)political allegiances but rather tracing potential political trajectories, pointing out certain opportunities for or blockages to political agency. And it is through such questions of potential[49], through such ethics that the 'political' can be explained (maybe: justified) in a thesis like this: power relations are contingent, hierarchies aren't pre-given, and a social-cultural cartography thus must engage with their emergence in order to grasp at least some of the complexity present in the field of research.

A variety of paths lead onwards from here. Before returning to *Gender construction*'s elaborations on how to adequately engage with such music scenes and activities in

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[43] Ibid.
[44] The title of one of the paper's sections: ibid., 622–624.
[45] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 16.
[46] Lutter / Reisenleitner: Introducing History (in)to Cultural Studies, 626.
[47] Ibid., 627.
[48] Marrati: Time and Affects, 316.
[49] Another important text for my understanding of academic work and politics has been Jeremy Gilbert: Sharing the pain? Why the coalition's cuts agenda draws on a masochistic streak in English culture, in: *New Statesman*. Cultural Capital (December 7, 2010). http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/cultural-capital/2010/12/pain-collective-coalition-uel. Last accessed: January 22, 2013. Here, Gilbert applies Spinozan ethics to education politics, suggesting that the British government's cuts constitute "a significant reduction in our collective capacity to act."

(scholarly) writing, I want to deepen the new thesis's understanding of history through a few short references to the aforementioned Meaghan Morris and to some authors whose work in gender theory and feminist history was crucial for my first thesis. Morris's *Too Soon Too Late*[50] contains a number of essays detailing and exemplifying modes of how to situate and work on history in studies of popular culture. She is inspired by and involved in feminism's "skeptical but *constructive*"[51] approach towards history which enables it to flexibly and self-reflectively handle the latter while also engaging (experimentally) with the present aiming at a more adequate future. What I want to take from Morris's text, for now, are the reminders that "longing[s] *for* history"[52] are multiple and divergent. Crucially, "it really is impossible to generalize about the role of 'time' and history in cultural (case) studies."[53] This is the case because of respective contexts' dynamics, applicable not least to fields like the heterogeneous and constantly shifting ones I am researching. And, according to Morris,

> theoretical debates in cultural studies have their own speeds and rates of change. Sometimes they move very fast, much faster than other lines of thinking in a society. Keeping up with the rate of change in our discipline can lead us to ignore the way that a rhetoric or a problematic deemed "dead" or "dated" in one context can be alive and kicking in another.[54]

Just as one's own speed, or the speeds of contexts one is involved in, needs to be considered, the field of research's speeds need to be taken note of in one's research: which tempi are appropriate?[55]

In my first thesis, historian Joan W. Scott's article "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"[56] enabled a sophisticated conceptualization of gender as always constituted through and constitutive of social relations. Her two-part definition of gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes" and as "a primary way of signifying relationships of power"[57], while not made explicit enough in this thesis to be detailed here, retains a constant presence the background as a way of thinking gender – and, to some extent, comparable

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[50] Morris, Meaghan: *Too Soon Too Late. History in Popular Culture* (Bloomington / Indianapolis 1998). Here, I am referring to the book's preface (pages XIII–XXIII) and introduction (1–28).
[51] Ibid., XIV. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[52] Ibid., 5. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[53] Ibid., 7.
[54] Ibid., 24–25.
[55] cf. ibid., 33, where she points out that one possible, specific line of inquiry "requires a tempo inappropriate to my object".
[56] Scott, Joan W.: Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis, in: *The American Historical Review* 91, 5 (1986), 1053–1075.
[57] Ibid., 1067.

categories of identity. It is extremely relevant to how I conceive of the social relations I am constantly attempting to trace. I am enormously indebted to Scott's approach, as I am to Judith Butler's ideas on the performativity of gender[58], of the contingent "gendered body", which could be seen "as the legacy of sedimented acts"[59], shaped through repetition in a "system of compulsory heterosexuality"[60]. Not only was Andrea Griesebner's introduction to feminist historiography an extremely useful companion for my history thesis's theory chapter, serving as a guide through a variety of theoretical developments (including Scott's and Butler's approaches), it also helped me theorize gender as multiply relational[61] – not essential, always interconnected with other categories.

Branden W. Joseph's *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*[62], which I read in 2010, served as a catalyst for *Gender construction* in that it granted me access to a terminology that allowed me to synthesize theoretical and methodological strands of thought and action that had already been shaping my thesis work up to that point – and it contributed additional dimensions. *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* traces the trajectory of musician, filmmaker, theorist (et cetera) Tony Conrad through a variety of contexts in the late 1950s and 1960s. However, Joseph's book is not a biography with Conrad as its subject, and certainly not a linear history. Instead, Joseph sometimes takes detours into fields that Conrad moved through or touched upon but that do not necessarily have him at their centers. This approach isn't arbitrary: it is inspired by Conrad's own irreducible trajectory. Conrad's work is extremely heterogeneous and impossible to categorize according to traditional disciplines or styles. Joseph considers this a reason why Conrad has been left by the wayside somewhat in art history: his very practice puts linear, category-based histories into question. In fact, Conrad has in his own way actively challenged traditional histories – like Joseph himself in *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, Conrad was inspired not least by Michel Foucault's conceptualization of history and authorship in his *Early Minimalism* project which questioned dominant histories of minimalism in general and that of the Theatre of Eternal Music, a group consisting of

[58] cf. Butler, Judith: Performative Acts and Gender Constitution. An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory, in: Sue-Ellen Case (ed.), *Performing Feminism* (Baltimore / London 1999), 270–282.
[59] Ibid., 274.
[60] Ibid., 275.
[61] cf. Griesebner, Andrea: *Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 153–158.
[62] For now, I am referring first and foremost to the book's first chapter, "What Is a Minor History?", in Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 11–58.

Conrad, John Cale, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, in particular, and also tackled questions of authorship.

Even more so than his discussion of Foucault, what is particularly important to my own work in Joseph's approach is the 'minor history' he proposes as an adequate form of writing about Tony Conrad and his various circles. The concept of the 'minor' is taken from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who have used it, among other things, for elaborations on 'minor science' and 'minor literature'; Conrad's sometime collaborators Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler had themselves been explicitly involved in the construction of 'minor histories' through their art. Joseph further develops the term on their basis. Major and minor are opposed neither quantitatively nor in terms of a qualitative rating.

> The major is rather what can be made to serve as an idea, category, or constant against which, whether explicitly or implicitly, other phenomena are measured. As an ideal, form, or standard that arises out of concrete phenomena, the major doubles and is therefore never entirely coincident with any manifestation from which it is derived or to which it is applied.[63]

While the major is aligned with hierarchic power, the minor can't be contained by the former's categorizations and is aligned with the interests of a Foucauldian / Nietzschean genealogy which opposes a linear history that "is told according to the constants, even temporally changing constants, that it can extract"[64]. This doesn't imply that a minor history is simply outside that which is discussed by a major history. Referencing a quote by Mike Kelley, Joseph writes that the minor is "in a 'parasitic' relation"[65] to major categories. To Joseph, Conrad is a minor artist: but not an inferior artist, an isolated practitioner or an overlooked genius. Major histories are unable to adequately handle the minor. Crucially for my project, Joseph writes that

> a minor history opens categories to their outside, onto a field of historical contingencies and events that is never homogeneous and that is always political. […] Against both extreme antinomies and homogeneous leveling, a minor history poses a field of continual differentiation: specific networks and connections.[66]

My own work could be conceptualized as minor cultural sociology in analogy to Joseph's minor history, but there are no definite borders between such approaches (although they certainly differ greatly in their specifics). A less obvious interest of

[63] Ibid., 48.
[64] Ibid., 50.
[65] Ibid., 51.
[66] Ibid., 52.

Beyond the Dream Syndicate that has gained greater importance in this second thesis is its tracing of (post-Cagean) shifts in artistic engagement with power relations / forms of power, its "aim […] to elucidate a transformation in the manner in which cultural practices relate to models, means, and structures of power."[67] While my own research often takes place on levels different to those accessed by Joseph (especially due to his deeper analysis of specific works of art), parts of this new thesis build on Joseph's tracing of such relations.

While I am mostly referencing Joseph when discussing the 'minor', Deleuze and Guattari themselves feature heavily in my project, a presence that will presumably intensify over time. I have only used individual concepts of theirs thus far but hope to further broaden my involvement in their work in the future. In fact, a Guattari workshop[68] in Vienna, 2012, was a key moment for this thesis. While I am not referencing much literature or actual concepts encountered at said conference, I remember catalytic moments that convinced me, for example, to tackle the topic of psychedelia (chapters 3.3 and 4.2).
Like in *Gender construction*, I want to present the useful (not-quite-)model of the rhizome according to its six principles proposed by Deleuze and Guattari[69]:

- "1 and 2. Principles of connection and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be."[70] Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize this model against more traditional, dominant models in the form of roots and radicles. My mode of exploring these music scenes (constituted through social relations, dynamic and heterogeneous) bears these principles' influence overtly.
- "3. Principle of multiplicity: it is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, 'multiplicity,' that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world."[71] Deleuze and Guattari consider Multiplicities "flat" ("they fill or occupy all their

[67] Ibid., 58.
[68] transversale 12. à propos félix guattari... Politik | Poetik | Therapie, in: *kaosmose*. http://kaosmose.blogspot.co.at/p/transversale.html. Last accessed: January 21, 2013.
[69] cf. Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 3–28.
[70] Ibid., 7.
[71] Ibid., 8.

dimensions"[72]). Lines of flight and deterritorialization define and change them. As I wrote in *Gender construction*, "I cannot write a thesis on a rhizomatic field of research considered in these terms without impinging on its multiplicity."[73] Also of importance here is Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on the relevance of lines rather than points: the rhizome isn't static.

- "4. Principle of asignifying rupture: against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure."[74] Rhizomes are spreading, never simply cut off, nonetheless in conflict, resist dichotomies.
- "5 and 6. Principle of cartography and decalcomania: a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model."[75] While principles 1, 2 and 3 are particularly ubiquitous in my portrayal of these scenes, 5 and 6 have helped me the most in conceptualizing what I am actually doing. While musicians' (or my) daily lives constitute maps that are constantly changing, a tracing copies a map, is potentially reductive. It could be said that a tracing "begins by selecting and isolating"[76]. While large parts of my project can be considered a map (not least the contingent work of interviewing musicians), my theses are tracings as they fix the "specific networks and connections" I am writing about, reterritorializing them, necessarily reducing their complexity and dynamics. Writing such a thesis requires an awareness of this aspect. As Deleuze and Guattari write: "It is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map*."[77] And later, talking about the necessary study of how lines are blocked, roots established et cetera: "But these impasses must always be resituated on the map, thereby opening them up to possible lines of flight."[78] In Gender construction, I argued that

> [i]t might thus be best to consider a project like this diploma thesis's, with its contacts, travels, interviews, doubts, mistakes, breakthroughs, texts an example of "map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages".[79]

[72] Ibid., 9.
[73] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 23.
[74] Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.
[75] Ibid., 13.
[76] Ibid., 14.
[77] Ibid., 14. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[78] Ibid., 16.
[79] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 24–25. The "map-tracing, rhizome-root assemblages" quotation is taken from Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 16.

There is a notable difference between most of *Gender construction* and some prominent parts of my new thesis: whereas I mostly practiced genuine tracing in the former, this new thesis at times sees me build on the first one's tracings and is, in those moments, less focused on the collected interview material. I suggest that such moments can be considered second-order tracings[80]. In the context of the methodology applied to my first thesis and to my project as a whole, I don't consider such an approach ideal – or rather, I don't consider it pragmatic. However, as this second thesis is specifically framed and more limited by spatial and temporal circumstances, such second-order tracing can be useful; not truly pragmatic, but a means to generate interesting ideas and theses. This first and foremost happens through the articulation / connection of secondary literature and my own theses as devised in Gender construction. At the same time, references to interview material (mostly unused thus far) will help me 'put the tracing back on the map'.

Another cartographic approach similar yet far from identical to mine (and Deleuze-related, but more singularly developed and individual than mine) is the one found in Lawrence Grossberg's *We Gotta Get out of This Place*[81]. Grossberg's "wild realism"[82] deals with "events within human reality in their singularity and their positivity"[83] and uses 'articulation' as a structural, complexity-aware concept. Against essentialist concepts according to which one thing necessarily engenders another, Grossberg pits articulation[84] (inspired by Stuart Hall's and Ernesto Laclau's readings of Antonio Gramsci):

> Articulation is the production of identity on top of difference, of unities out of fragments, of structures across practices. Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics. And these links are themselves articulated into larger structures, etc.[85]

Articulation, here, is a form of connection, "the practice of linking together elements which have no necessary relation to each other; the theoretical and historical practice by

[80] A text relevant to my *Politikwissenschaft* diploma exam served as an inspiration for this: Brand, Ulrich / Görg, Christoph / Wissen, Markus: Second-Order Condensations of Societal Power Relations: Environmental Politics and the Internationalization of the State from a Neo-Poulantzian Perspective, in: *Antipode* 43, 1 (2011), 149–175.
[81] At this point in my thesis, I am referring to Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 37–67.
[82] Ibid., 48.
[83] Ibid., 51.
[84] cf. ibid., 52–61.
[85] Ibid., 54.

which the particular structure of relationships which defines any society is made."[86] Grossberg's form of cultural studies is anti-foundationalist and requires a dense study of contexts. One of my aims for future projects is to engage more closely with Grossberg's approach in its entirety, rather than to pick out individual elements[87] as I have been doing in these theses. Grossberg's study encompasses great parts of society; it is constantly fascinating, but a full adaptation would explode my own study as it is now.

Another concept established by Deleuze and Guattari and useful for my thesis is that of becoming. In my first thesis, this was particularly relevant to my study of, indeed, gender construction and gender relations. Jeremy Gilbert describes becoming as

> a kind of vector of transformation which, properly understood, has no point of departure and no final destination. Becoming thus conceived is never "pure" flux: it always has direction, but direction is not the same thing as destination.[88]

Becoming takes place at the molecular, fluid level rather than at the molar, fixed / identitarian one and is about flux, not identity.[89] Not only is it usefully applied to the aesthetico-technological muddling of identity, as it was in *Gender construction*[90], but it can also be considered in strategic terms. In *Anticapitalism and Culture*, Gilbert applies a definition proposed by Brian Massumi according to which strategy involves experimentation, collective evaluation and "an emphasis on pragmatics – on the question of 'what is to be done' – and an orientation towards some at least partially determinant imagined future."[91] The question for strategy is a crucial one in Gilbert's book, in which he investigates cultural studies' connections to and potential roles for contemporary emancipatory politics. He suggests that the "core task of cultural studies" is a type of "so-called conjunctural analysis" which can support radical oppositional politics, here those of the anti-capitalism movement, by "try[ing] to map its terrain and warn it of obstacles."[92] He, too, engages with concepts like anti-essentialism and articulation (via Laclau and Mouffe)[93]. To him, Cultural Studies, diverse as its texts and

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[86] Ibid., 397.
[87] For some ideas on the theoretical benefits and potential relevance on the combination of specific (well-selected) tools, see Massumi, Brian: Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy, in: Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, xv as well as Griesebner: *Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 139.
[88] Gilbert, Jeremy: More than a Woman. Becoming-woman on the Disco floor, in: Reitsamer, Rosa / Weinzierl, Rupert (eds.): *Female Consequences*, 184.
[89] cf. ibid.
[90] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 126–129.
[91] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 212–213; also see 222–223.
[92] Ibid., 3.
[93] cf. ibid., 49–57 and 154–156, respectively.

proponents are, is most interested in an analysis "of the precise configurations of power which shape contemporary life, without prior assumptions as to the relative importance of economics, politics or the arts."[94] What tools such a project employs depends on the specific context and configuration – an approach similar to that of my own project. The field of research's characteristics can't be guessed in advance[95]; in my theses' case, the very field of research can't be assumed to be a stable, pre-defined one. Power relations have to be traced. Branden W. Joseph remarks that "power […] is multiple – always existing within the mutual penetration of regimes"[96], not reducible to one single type. The act of tracing stabilizes[97] the field of research, reterritorializes the scenes, presenting a snapshot of musical-social fields that could never even pretend to objectively delimit and adequately reproduce these complex scenes. That said, while I agree with Gilbert's emphasis on the avoidance of "prior assumptions as to the relative importance of economics, politics or the arts", there are certain prior assumptions that this thesis rests on. Firstly, I have already traced these scenes in (relative) detail in *Gender construction*. While that paper wasn't focusing explicitly on "the precise configurations of power" relevant to life in and surrounding these scenes, its actual concern (an analysis of how gender manifests in these scenes as defined primarily through the social relations constituting them) certainly implies such configurations and their analysis (though not in any totality, however that might be conceptualized). Gilbert's summarization of Foucault's idea of power is very reminiscent of what I focused on in *Gender construction*: it "only exists *through* social relations, and […] is therefore immanent to them."[98] The extent to which I will rely on and invoke the first thesis's analyses and conclusions is dependent on an indefinable number of factors and varies from topic to topic, from aspect to aspect, from chapter to chapter. In some cases, interview material hardly relevant to the first thesis, or rather its written manifestation, will become central to subchapters; in others, theses already formulated in *Gender construction* will be interrogated, contrasted, deepened or simply recuperated so as to enable adequate examination of other, thus far undiscussed or underdiscussed themes. This is the question of the second-order tracing discussed earlier.

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[94] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 7.
[95] Also see, for example: Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 61–67.
[96] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 133. Also see Scott: Gender, 1067, for her introduction of Foucauldian conceptions of power into histories dealing with questions of gender.
[97] cf. Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 41, or Morris: *Too Soon Too Late*, 1.
[98] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 136. (Emphasis in the original text.)

Secondly, that original tracing itself already relied on certain other tracings to some extent – from interviewees' own tracings of their respective trajectories to secondary literature by other authors. I think that in this new thesis, (so-called) secondary literature will actually be more present. This includes articles on the scenes or their protagonists as well as the key texts on other musical-social fields that I will be constantly employing alongside other texts like *Anticapitalism and Culture* itself. Some of that book's basic concepts might appear in this 'theory' chapter but will nonetheless accompany my new tracing activities, often adding useful ideas that may at specific points help me and, hopefully, the thesis's readers to arrive not necessarily at a greater but at a more adequate understanding of these scenes.

Thirdly, that these scenes – despite my own, I think, relatively well-founded focus on the social – are still *music* scenes is bound to result in the music possessing great weight. Nonetheless, it will not necessarily serve as a rigidly determining factor or as the necessary key to configurations of power in these fields. Psychedelic aesthetics and improvisatory practice will reappear throughout the thesis but will be woven contingently into a (hopefully) dense web that involves, indeed, economics and politics and other aspects aplenty. However, my project still suffers from a certain lack of musicological knowledge, or a shying away from such topics. I will use this opportunity to make more obvious how, for example, a future PhD project could benefit from such expansions of expertise. Thus, this thesis is also of relevance to my project on a meta-level and will help me in my consideration of future decisions.

Another concept that is potentially useful to my thesis, or to its description / definition, is "a distinction between two levels of political engagement"[99] used by Gilbert. The 'micropolitical' is

> that level of interaction at which all relationships (even those between non-human entities such as animals, plants or even, arguably, sub-atomic particles) might be described as political insofar as they can involve relative stabilisations, alterations, augmentations, diminutions or transfers of power.[100]

'Politics' (or 'macropolitics'), however, appears "in the more widely understood sense of the general field of public contestation between identifiable and opposing sets of

[99] Ibid., 8; cf. ibid., 8–10.
[100] Ibid., 8.

ideas about how social relationships should be ordered."[101] Gilbert, not wanting to proclaim one of these levels superior to the other, thus attempts to introduce a consciously fragile distinction whose two levels are related in complex ways; they should not be considered intrinsically divided, and neither of them should be seen as exclusively determinant of the other. This paper isn't exclusively concerned with either level – though, as I think the examples I will be dealing with will show, macropolitical elements can be relatively hard to come by in these scenes, for better or worse.

Like *Gender construction*'s theory section, this part of the paper is best closed through reference to Angela McRobbie's text "The Es and the Anti-Es". McRobbie theorizes potential articulation of anti-essentialist approaches and empirical research (the titular 'Es' are the empirical, the ethnographic and the experiential, whereas the 'anti-Es' are anti-essentialism, post-structuralism and psychoanalysis), especially in a feminist context. This quote sums up her approach:

> The particular authority of the empirical mode can be occupied now with greater complexity. It can be both used where appropriate and deconstructed elsewhere for its narratives of truth, its representation of results. Research can therefore be rewritten and rescripted according to the politics of its location. Empirical work can still be carried out even if the feminist researcher no longer believes it to be a truth-seeking activity. Indeed, awareness of this and of the structures and conventions which provide a regulative framework for doing cultural studies' research brings not just greater reflexivity to the field, but also demonstrates cultural studies to be a field of inquiry that is aware of the power which its competing discourses wield.[102]

My own continuous (but not unchanging) project is located at such an intersection of anti-essentialist theory and empirical research. Most obviously, especially in *Gender construction*, my theses attempt a conceptualization of these music scenes through the use of interview quotes, thus, to use McRobbie's words, "allow[ing] many voices to mingle so that the authoritative voice of the ethnographer is dislodged"[103]. This is never a complete democratization, a pure, ahierarchic multiplicity of voices (as McRobbie herself is aware[104]), but I think this approach enables me to make my own work more traceable, to allow for more intense questioning of my own assumptions and conclusions.

[101] Ibid.
[102] McRobbie: The Es and the Anti-Es, 129–130.
[103] Ibid., 130.
[104] cf. ibid., 130.

2.2 Scenes[105]

In *Gender construction*, I combined the rhizomatic models presented in the theory part with Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson's conceptualization of music scenes as 'local', 'trans-local' and 'virtual'[106]. This approach is quite similar to the combination used by Elke Zobl in her article "*Zehn Jahre Ladyfest*"[107] – although, in her case, networks are further theorized via Manuel Castell's work. The benefit of such a combination is that it allows for a complexity-aware (non-)stabilization of fields like those discussed here.

'Scene', in Bennett and Peterson's case, isn't used in the limited, colloquial sense of the term. Rather, this term "offers the possibility of examining musical life in its myriad forms, both production- and consumption-oriented, and the various, often locally specific ways in which these cross-cut each other."[108] While the three scene types' names are arguably self-explanatory, they should be considered quite dynamic; these are analytical levels and – as my theses show, too – such networks can be local, trans-local and virtual at the same time, on different, interconnected levels. So while the study of local scenes is geographically limited, numerous levels and connections can be analyzed. The study of trans-local scenes doesn't necessarily deal with local scenes' loss of distinctiveness but can rather point out connections beyond the local, facilitated not least through technological developments. Musicians may develop and work in local contexts "while retaining a sense of their connectedness with parallel expressions of musical taste and stylistic preference occurring in other regions, countries and continents."[109] Virtual scenes, meanwhile, can exist beyond these other scene types – once again enabled by technology, notably the Internet, and often involving forms of competence not as crucial to the other scene types, like relevant specific forms of relevant knowledge. Like Zobl's article, my theses show and imply the interrelation and indivisibility of these analytical levels – a take on music scenes that is necessarily complexity-aware in such technology-bolstered unpredictable contexts.

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[105] My first thesis's elaboration on these subjects can be found in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 40–55.
[106] Bennett, Andy: Consolidating the music scenes perspective, in: *Poetics* 32 (2004), 223–234.
[107] Zobl, Elke: Zehn Jahre Ladyfest. Rhizomatische Netzwerke einer lokalen, transnationalen und virtuellen queer-feministischen Szene, in: Reitsamer, Rosa / Fichna, Wolfgang (eds.): *"They Say I'm Different …". Popularmusik, Szenen und ihre Akteur_innen* (Wien 2011), 208–227.
[108] Bennett: Consolidating the music scenes perspective, 226.
[109] Ibid., 229.

In my first thesis, I referred to a variety of key texts, the best-known of which is probably *The Wire*'s "New Weird America"[110] cover story, written by interviewee David Keenan, reporting from 2003's Brattleboro Free Folk Festival which interviewees Ron Schneiderman and Matt Valentine organized. Musically, Keenan describes these scenes as "draw[ing] from mountain music, Country blues, HipHop, militant funk and psychedelia as much as free jazz." Keenan sees this as a recent tendency, as "disparate, culturally disenfranchised cells" becoming trans-local, "forming alliances via limited handmade releases and a vast subterranean network of samizdat publications, musician- and fan-run labels and distributors"[111] whose DIY approach, enabled by technological developments (CD-R burning, Internet…), was necessary in order to actually be able to publish these unconventional musics. Keenan quotes Matt Valentine, according to whom the festival "was all about free thinking folk"[112]. Keenan mentions the scene's social and caring aspects; he does see a connection to "American folk and roots" musics but also writes that

> improvisation and the application of the drone open up these new folk musicians to the roar of the cosmos. In the process, they have stripped improvisation of its jazz-informed reputation as a cerebral discipline and rebirthed it as *the* original, primal musical gesture, reminding us that it was always folk music's most natural mode of expression.[113]

Keenan's talk "Both Sides = Now: the Aesthetics of Free Folk"[114], years later, was another main source. Therein, Keenan deepens the understanding of many key aspects of the scenes in question. What was particularly interesting to me was that Keenan made the sheer extension of these webs[115] obvious once again. The original 'New Weird America' article had focused on artists playing the Free Folk Festival (Paul Flaherty and Chris Corsano, Dredd Foole, MV & EE, Pelt, Scorces, Sunburned Hand Of The Man…) but also integrated artists like Jackie-O Motherfucker and Six Organs Of Admittance who didn't actually perform at the festival). Like some of the festival's performers, they didn't actually live anywhere close to Brattleboro – the Free Folk Festival was just one

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[110] Keenan, David: The Fire Down Below, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 234 (August 2003), 34–41.
[111] Keenan: The Fire Down Below, 34.
[112] Matt Valentine, quoted in ibid.
[113] Ibid. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[114] Keenan, David: Both Sides = Now: the Aesthetics of Free Folk. ExploreMusic talk (MP3), in: *Gateshead CLC Webradio*, http://www.ictgateshead.org/radio/2007/02/david_keenan_aesthetics_of_fre.html. Last accessed: March 14, 2011.
[115] On the web-like character of these scenes, also see, for example, Adam, Holger: Brattleboro – Hasselt – Krefeld. Internationale Begegnungen im Plattenladen: Unrock-Instore-Gigs, in: *testcard. Beiträge zur Popgeschichte 19. Blühende Nischen* (Mainz 2010), 82.

of numerous small festivals in the area in the first few years of the 21st century[116]. However, Keenan's talk also included young, drone-oriented West Coast artists like Grouper and The Skaters. Here, too, the 'folk' part of free folk references artists' DIY activities rather than a particular style. It is this relative openness and focus on the social that has made me choose 'free folk' as an (always unstable) term to use in my theses' titles.

Olaf Karnik's 2003 article on these scenes in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*[117] was one of numerous German language texts I consulted. In Karnik's reading, autonomy, collectivity and indeterminacy are important to these scenes. Collective experimentation here involves what Karnik calls an "*allseits anschlussfähiges Nicht-auf-den- Punkt-kommen*"[118] (a not-reaching-the-point that is connectable anywhere). His further elaborations on the nonrepresentative, sprawling character of free folk made me invoke "[s]prawling rhizomes instead of tree-like structures, improvisatory immanence instead of transcendent ideals of genre or technique?"[119] Karnik's informed discussion also includes Animal Collective, not least as an example for how experimental electronics may be just as present in these fields.

Animal Collective are seen as situated between two different New Weird Americas by Diedrich Diederichsen – that of the improvisational bands like No-Neck Blues Band, Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Pelt or Jackie-O Motherfucker and that of the individualistic songwriters like Devendra Banhart and CocoRosie. It would be possible to go further in-depth so as to discuss strengths and weaknesses of this distinction, but generally, it is quite useful and one way of pointing out that there has been great conflation between scenes that, socially and musically, aren't that *closely* connected.[120]

Martin Büsser, in *testcard*[121], continues on Olaf Karnik's path, emphasizing his notion of a "*spirituelle Wertegemeinschaft*"[122] ("a spiritual community of values"[123]) and further expanding the perspective to include Black Dice and Load Records. Here and in

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[116] cf. Leech: *Seasons They Change*, 230–240; Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 161.
[117] Karnik, Olaf: Free Rock, Free Folk, Free USA. Rockmusik im Zeichen von Autonomie und Gemeinschaft, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (October 23, 2003). http://www.nzz.ch/2003/10/23/fe/article96DAG.html. Last accessed: December 13, 2008.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 45.
[120] Also see Petrusich, Amanda: *It Still Moves. Lost Songs, Lost Highways, and the Search for the Next American Music* (London 2009), 239.
[121] Büsser, Martin: Befreite Klänge. Die neue Lust an Experiment und Kollektiv – Von BLACK DICE bis Load Records, in: *testcard 14. Discover America* (Mainz 2005), 24–33.
[122] Karnik: Free Rock.
[123] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 46.

an article on free folk's pack- / swarm-like "*Kollektivimprovisation und Naturmystik*"[124] for *De:Bug*, Büsser uses Deleuzian notions of 'becoming-animal' to describe these scenes, (in the latter case) alongside references to an always impure, non-reactionary essentialism. (My original overview on these scenes also included references to David Keenan's article[125] on 'Hypnagogic pop' tendencies and the ever-increasing stylistic diversity of these multi-layered scenes; I will return to said article in chapter 3.2.)

Following my comparison of these introductory articles, I suggested "see[ing the scenes'] heterogeneity as a constitutive factor"[126] and went on to illustrate and detail this idea. Heterogeneous connections were drawn: artists, as diverse as their musical and geographical backgrounds may be, often share record labels (Time-Lag, Last Visible Dog, Secret Eye, Not Not Fun, All Tomorrow's Parties, Ecstatic Peace!, Camera Obscura…); bands share members, or individual musicians play in multiple projects (a tendency so ubiquitous that it doesn't make much sense to refer to groups like GHQ, involving members of Magik Markers and Double Leopards, as 'supergroups'); releases are shared (split albums or singles, compilations…); live music / live events are crucial to these scenes[127]; publications both form (virtual) scenes and can serve as important nodes (examples included were *Arthur Magazine*[128], *Forced Exposure*[129] and *The Ptolemaic Terrascope*[130]); finally, international connections mostly omitted from my theses, mainly due to practical reasons, but crucial to an understanding of these scenes, were pointed out.

All in all, the ever-shifting character of these scenes, their "fluid, multiple, hard-to-grasp connections"[131], requires a multi-level approach to scene research and can't be described at all through static or binary, tree-like, 'major' models. Just as many of these bands themselves are in flux, the scenes as a whole are constantly changing. The researcher's own position isn't 'objective' and constantly needs to be reflected on ("to

[124] Büsser, Martin: Free Folk: Kollektive Improvisation. Kollektivimprovisation und Naturmystik, in: *De:Bug Magazin* (February 2, 2007). http://www.de-bug.de/mag/4662.html. Last accessed: December 12, 2008.
[125] Keenan, David: Childhood's end, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 306 (August 2009), 26–31.
[126] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 48.
[127] cf. Keenan: Both Sides = Now; The Fire Down Below, 34.
[128] *Arthur Magazine* | Since 2002. http://arthurmag.com/. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.
[129] *Forced Exposure* is still active as a mailorder: *Forced Exposure*. http://www.forcedexposure.com/. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.
[130] *Terrascope*. http://www.terrascope.co.uk/. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.
[131] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 52.

make oneself traceable"[132]). I believe this approach worked very well in *Gender construction*, which confirmed and elaborated on the importance of open, enthusiastically DIY-oriented scenes in which like-mindedness and friendship are of greater constitutive importance than virtuosic technique, thus hardly leaving any barriers in place for those interested in participation and avoiding rigidities, not least in terms of gender relations (although these scenes shouldn't be considered utopian; and sometimes, more rigid elements can be present). Openness towards new sounds and experiences is crucial and, as my thesis implied, is connected to a certain egalitarian, ahierarchic constitution. Creativity and individuality are valued greatly, but so is the network of connections that offers mutual support and care.[133]

2.3 Methods[134]

Interviews were constitutive of my first thesis: I gathered a total of 22 interviews with 25 persons, mostly conducted on a grant-supported journey to the USA in the summer of 2009. While quotes from these interviews shape this new thesis to a lesser extent than they shaped *Gender construction*, they are still at the core of my conception of this paper's structure and modes of functioning, of the knowledge generated therein. A detailed presentation of the thoughts behind, the literature inspiring and the actual conduct of these interviews can be found in *Gender construction*. Now, I want to summarize my own approach and synthesis and showcase some key points and parts of the process relevant to a basic understanding of my project. It should be noted that while I am following my own first thesis's methodology chapter here, the text along whose lines I discussed methodological questions for most of said chapter is Ulrike Froschauer and Manfred Lueger's *Das qualitative Interview*[135], a dense and detailed German language introduction to the conduct of qualitative interviews – a very broad field. In *Gender construction*'s chapter, I attempted to stay close to the very specific language used by the authors; at times, I introduced some of their German-language terms or phrases and then explained them in English or attempted translation. As there is less space for such a detailed approach here, I will, every now and then, resort to quoting particularly apt or precise individual sentences or phrases from my own earlier

[132] Ibid., 22.
[133] For a broader summary of my first thesis, see ibid., 189–205.
[134] The equivalent, much longer chapter of my first thesis can be found in ibid., 56–93.
[135] Froschauer, Ulrike / Lueger, Manfred: *Das qualitative Interview. Zur Praxis interpretativer Analyse sozialer Systeme* (Wien 2003).

text, so as not to further muddle the already harshly summarized information by forcing myself to re-work Froschauer and Lueger's expansive yet detailed text into my own. These quoted bits will be designated as quotations, of course, while I will also try to refer extensively to the relevant pages and chapters in Froschauer and Lueger's book in the footnotes so as to make my own approach traceable. Specific references will be made where my earlier text's English words were explicitly connected to German originals; in numerous other cases, there will of course be similarities to Froschauer and Lueger's text due to their language's very precision and specificity.

Froschauer and Lueger's exposition of this cluster of methods is as strict in its adherence to complexity and self-reflective awareness thereof as it is dedicated to the upholding of scholarly flexibility. I consider this particular mode of (more than) gathering material very adequate for a project such as mine. Cultural studies' "connection with personal, 'lived' experience"[136], combined with the dislodging of the ethnographer's voice as mentioned by McRobbie, thus helps enable a complex tracing aware of its own reduction and selection of knowledge and material, reflecting not just on the research field's general context but also on the specific context in which material was produced. Conducting the interview, or at least instigating an exchange that is hopefully not just a linear question and answer (Q & A) session, I am an interview's co-author.[137]

Qualitative interviews do not serve the accumulation of facts (although it is entirely possible to collect these in such a context). Instead, they allow for a deeper analysis.[138] Froschauer and Lueger present three fundamental points[139] on which their elaborations and their understanding of qualitative interviews are based. The researcher needs to have a basic understanding of how the relevant social system is composed. Consequently, the tools used must be flexible so as to allow for an adequate interrogation of the field of research / social system. The third basic point concerns the reflexivity of the researcher's strategy, a strategy that must be modified if necessary. Qualitative research is interested in the "*sinnhaft[e] Strukturierung von Ausdrucksformen sozialer Prozesse*"[140]: "[t]he role of qualitative research is […] to

[136] Lutter / Reisenleitner: Introducing History (in)to Cultural Studie, 614.
[137] An idea emphasized by my first thesis's supervisor, Roman Horak. Also see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 60, and Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 51.
[138] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 8, 15–21.
[139] cf. ibid., 11.
[140] Ibid., 17.

investigate the structures of meaning of social processes' forms of expression."[141] Information is generated through the interviews, then contextualized and "assembled into an ordered structure of knowledge."[142] Froschauer and Lueger are interested in in interviewees' "*Selektionsleistungen*"[143] ("selection efforts"[144]) as provoked by the interview's process. The interviewer needs to construct a positive atmosphere conducive to what in Froschauer and Lueger's view is hopefully as open, or at least non-predetermined, as possible a conversation / exchange.[145]

My own interview practice didn't adhere exactly to the interview types proposed by Froschauer and Lueger – I didn't offer the same openness[146], and I was both interviewer *and* interpreter[147], unable to involve a team into the process as I was. To understand these differences, it is worth consulting Peter Witzel's proposition for a type of qualitative interviews whose goals vary partially from Froschauer and Lueger's: the problem-centered interview (PCI)[148]. "The principles guiding a problem-centered interview (PCI) aim to gather objective evidence on human behavior as well as on subjective perceptions and ways of processing social reality."[149] Witzel lists three principles[150]: problem-centered orientation involves "the production of broad and differentiated data material" and an "understanding [of] the subjective view of the respondent while gradually making communication more precisely address the research problem." Object orientation asks for an interviewer's flexibility in her / his approach. Witzel writes that "[t]he biographical method points for instance to developing patterns of meanings in the process of an individual's confrontation with social reality."[151] For the principle of process orientation, Witzel invokes what I called "the link between the research process and the *Gesprächsklima*"[152], the exchange's atmosphere that Froschauer and Lueger write about: trust begets openness; the PCI involves contingent cooperation.

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[141] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 58.
[142] Ibid., 59, based on Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 35.
[143] Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 34.
[144] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 60.
[145] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 58–64.
[146] cf. ibid., 33–35.
[147] cf. ibid., 83–84, 104–106.
[148] Witzel, Andreas: The Problem-Centered Interview, in: *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 1, 1 (2000), Art. 22, 26 paragraphs. http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs0001228. Last accessed: January 15, 2012.
[149] Ibid., [1].
[150] cf. ibid., [4].
[151] Ibid.
[152] Spiegel: Gender construction, 62.

Froschauer and Lueger suggest different approaches on the interviewer's part for different types of expertise on the interviewed's.[153] While genuinely external expertise is very hard to encounter in these music scenes, two forms of expertise internal to the field are of relevance here. Expertise related to action

> involves sedimented knowledge resulting from experience in activities relevant to the social system. It is implicit to agents' "*Wahrnehmungs-, Denk- und Handlungsweisen*", their modes of perception, thought and action […]. It thus shapes and renders possible their social practice within the field and, as Froschauer and Lueger suggest, is crucial to a researcher's understanding of the field's logic.[154]

Ideally, the interview process here generates narrations and requires structuring efforts on the side of the interviewed. "These efforts are expressions of the system's structures and processes." Whereas Lueger and Froschauer ask for the analysis of structures of meaning latent here, my own project – not least through Witzel's suggestions – very much deals with manifest content as well. This is the type of expertise most common among my interviewees, who mostly are active as musicians in these scenes. Reflection expertise, meanwhile, is "more informed by relationality, more reflective and abstract."[155] These experts can be found at social systems' nodes. Here, it is the "rules of action at the system's nodes" that are of particular interest in interviews generally comparable to those of the former type, and the delimiting of the system in question ("integrat[ing it] to a unity in difference"[156]). In some of my interviewees' cases, this form of expertise is readily apparent. Phil McMullen and David Keenan have both been active as writers tracing these scenes and their musics and have also curated events. But the distinctions are fluid: Keenan is also a musician and co-owns the Volcanic Tongue record store, certainly an important node, while some musicians have been dedicated to reflecting on the scenes they move in (and in some cases others) over the years – see, for example, Sharon Cheslow's publishing activities for the *Interrobang?!* magazine. Numerous interviewees own labels of varying sizes – Last Visible Dog's Chris Moon should be mentioned here, as should Britt Brown of Not Not Fun Records. Brown's is another singular case, as he has been increasingly active writing for *The Wire*. So while my initial interview with Brown didn't differ markedly from most others, recent emails made greater use of Brown's specific reflection expertise (notably his views on the increasing presence or even dominance of solo projects, as opposed to bands, in these

[153] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 37–39, 52–53, 91–92; also: 39–41.
[154] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 63; quote from Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 37.
[155] Ibid. based on Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 38.
[156] Spiegel: *Gender construction* 64, based on Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 92

scenes). McMullen's and Cheslow's interviews probably differed most markedly from others'. McMullen's should be considered an expert interview as proposed by Michaela Pfadenhauer, an exchange between well-prepared expert and long-experienced 'quasi-expert' that helped me make greater sense of how these scenes function.[157] Cheslow's, meanwhile, engaged with her very specific trajectory through a variety of underground scenes (not all of which are immediately recognizable as connected to those I am writing about) while being limited by circumstances related less to the actual conversation itself than to organizational factors (i.e. me having to catch a plane following this interview, which had been set up at a relatively late point). I will return to the actual exchanges' conduct after some remarks on the interviews' organization.

Research design according to Froschauer and Lueger[158] involves four phases, starting with a planning phase in which the researcher should keep the research question relatively open and acquire competences relevant to her / his encounter with the field of research. The researcher's own relation to the (potential) interviewed is thematized: what are the latter's expectations, what consequences do those bear? In the second phase, the researcher increases and stabilizes her / his engagement with the field and orientation therein. Conversations with experts or gatekeepers are of use here, helping open up and structure the field. Types of expertise should be identified; mutual trust is established not least through adequate description of one's research project. The third and main phase is cyclical. "Investigation and interpretation are indivisible and need to remain flexible" while being constantly scrutinized. Despite Froschauer and Lueger's recommendations, I didn't "introduce[e] cycles of partial analysis"[159] as most of the relevant material was gathered within a relatively short time frame. (Self-)reflection was a constant nonetheless – and the very division (yet continuity) between my two theses could be considered in such cyclical terms. In the fourth phase, the researcher considers the form of her / his study's representation, its aims and potential audiences.
Quite some thought went into the process of contacting the potential interviewees – especially when finding that my early contact mails in their (consciously chosen) simplicity, despite not being unsuccessful, probably failed to adequately communicate

[157] cf. Pfadenhauer, Michaela: Auf gleicher Augenhöhe reden. Das Experteninterview – ein Gespräch zwischen Experte und Quasi-Experte, in: Bogner, Alexander / Littig, Beate / Menz, Wolfgang (eds.): Das *Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung. 2. Auflage* (Wiesbaden 2005), 113–130.
[158] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 21–33.
[159] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 66.

the thesis's complexity-aware approach in some cases.[160] Most interviews consisted of conversations with one individual person each, although there were a few exchanges with two persons at once "as their dynamics reproduce social relations."[161] Such exchanges had rules of their own, but differed from each other as well. My interviews with couples Jeffrey Alexander and Miriam Goldberg in Pittsburgh and David Keenan and Heather Leigh Murray in Glasgow were still relatively similar in structure to most single person interviews, whereas the interview with Labanny Bly and Paul LaBrecque in Graz resulted in a very different, unique exchange between two artists who knew each other but learned a lot more about each other's trajectories and views on that occasion. Interview lengths varied: an approximate standard length might have been two hours, but some interviews were cut short by time constraints while others passed the three hour mark. In addition, further conversations and shared experiences before and after the recorded interviews varied greatly.

I first started contacting potential interviewees in early 2009. In most cases, contact was established through email. Some interviews took place in Europe as certain interviewees lived there at the time (some of which, in addition, were playing concerts in Austria). Most interviews, however, took place in July 2009 in the USA. This journey was organized according to general feasibility of the itinerary and according to interview opportunities that manifested over time. For such a dense, heterogeneous and dynamic field of research, no line-up of interview partners could ever be deemed representative, but I aimed for a certain variety "in terms of gender, age, aesthetics, associations, geography et cetera"[162], sometimes also attempting to challenge my own specific view of the scenes by contacting potential interviewees whose work I was less familiar with at the time. My journey neglected large parts of the country, a potential problem that was eased by the mobility exhibited in some interviewees' narratives.

How did I 'lead' my interviews? I followed Froschauer and Lueger's chapter[163] on such conduct and tried to internalize their insistence that, as I summed up their position,

> interviewers […] are supposed to be learners, show interest and curiosity, avoid prejudice, never consider the interviewees' utterances 'wrong', be attentive and questioning, and avoid discriminating participants.[164]

[160] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 66–67.
[161] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 71; cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 55–57, 70–72.
[162] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 67; cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 54–55.
[163] Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 51–79.
[164] Spiegel: *Gender construction* 71.

The importance of the system's own structuring efforts is once again established, as is the actual exchange's necessary openness and context-specificity. A flexible variety of tactics to further the conversation is presented and recommended. Froschauer and Lueger propose six phases to the interview process. The first one is the planning phase, involving preparation and considerations of the interview's context. Second is the phase in which interviewees are contacted – a phase that requires a well-contemplated choice of information to transmit which should allow the interviewed to make up her / his / their mind on the interview proposal. The interview's opening constitutes the third phase, which involves further clarification on expectations, on what is going to happen during and after the interview, how the recording takes place, what will be made of the transcripts. The fourth phase consists of the actual exchange and "involves narrations and inquiries and should follow and build on the various offers encountered within the conversation."[165] This was, presumably, somewhat limited in my interviews' case as my opening questions tended to resemble each other, delimiting yet opening space for biographical narratives. However, I did structure these conversations in ways similar to Froschauer and Lueger's distinction between exploratory and clarificatory parts. The fifth phase closes the main interview, potentially hosts additional conversations and further organization and generally remains open to further connections. In the sixth phase, the interview's context is documented (in addition to the actual recording) through the creation of a protocol that involves further information on the interview's arrangement, dynamics, situation, additional exchanges before or after the main conversation, as well as early theses inspired by the conversation (a factor that I mostly neglected due to most of the interviews' temporal closeness to each other).

Froschauer and Lueger add hints for how to keep conversations open (and thus to enable the structuring efforts so important to their concept of the qualitative interview) but emphasize that the conversation's atmosphere is key. Questions' degrees of openness can vary, but the more open ones tend to provide more of the freedom crucial to such interviews. The deepening of conversations through requests for (in my case) elaboration and commentary is another useful aspect of such interview technique.

[165] Ibid., 73.

Andreas Witzel presents four instruments for the PCI[166]: the short questionnaire, collecting data, wasn't one I used as I didn't want "to formalize the interview process too much"[167], instead hoping to collect such data through the interviews or email, if necessary. A guideline, meanwile, I did use (contrary to Froschauer and Lueger's suggestion). Witzel writes: "[i]deally, [guidelines] accompany the communication process as a sort of transparency of the background, serving to supervise how individual elements in the course of the discussion are worked through."[168] The use of tape recording was a particularly obvious aspect (although in my case, a digital recorder was employed). Witzel's take on postscripts, unlike Froschauer and Lueger's, doesn't mention conversations led before or after the interview. I did, however, try to document these thoroughly, although "the usual contingencies of daily conversation"[169] played a part in foreclosing any pretense of completeness.

The structure of Witzel's PCI[170] involves two types of strategies: story-telling and comprehension are generated especially through (inductive) general and (deductive) specific exploration – types that are interconnected, as specific exploration refers to the knowledge generated through general exploration. Further useful recommendations (on opening questions, "[a] sort of 'luring out' of concrete examples of experiences or biographical episodes"[171], clarificatory questions which may "disrupt that which is self-evident in daily life"[172]…) are included. An important difference between Witzel and Froschauer / Lueger becomes quite clear: Witzel does advocate a certain comparability between interviews. My own approach didn't omit this aspect but was carefully self-reflective, collecting biographic details that might be compared but still retaining a complexity-aware concept of 'experience'[173], which needs to be contextualized[174].

My own interviews were designed so as to fit my general conceptualization of these scenes.

> By writing this thesis, I construct (or: those analyzed aspects constitute) a hitherto unconstituted, not yet academically traced field of research while focusing on these integral, not exclusive

[166] cf. Witzel: The Problem-Centered Interview, [5]–[9].
[167] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 75.
[168] Witzel: The Problem-Centered Interview, [7].
[169] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 76.
[170] cf. Witzel: The Problem-Centered Interview, [10]-[18].
[171] Ibid., [14].
[172] Ibid., [16].
[173] cf. Scott, Joan W.: The Evidence of Experience, in: *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 773–797.
[174] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 98–99.

> topics (gender relations, gender identities…) that potentially shape other aspects of the scenes just as much as they themselves are potentially shaped by these other aspects.[175]

I wanted to retain a certain thematic openness and to avoid imposing my specific research questions onto the conversations. Thus, they consisted of two parts: a narrative one, usually opened by asking the interviewed about their initial access to music, generating narration along biographical lines that was often structured according to my interest in the social relations, the connections between individuals, groups, labels, festivals and the genesis of these connections. This interest was apparent in my own questions but was also internalized by some interviewees who helped me follow that line of inquiry. This narrative part allowed me to trace these scenes according to individual (but always also social) trajectories and, all in all, seemed more popular among the interviewed. The two parts were usually divided, yet connected, by a question that asked individuals for associations or connotations, for thoughts on the thesis's topic (*Gender construction and American 'Free Folk' music(s)*). The second part mostly consisted of more direct, Q & A-like questions based on the thesis's topic, some of which were quantitative. (This also included a question for artists' social and political ideals.) While this more 'closed' type of question could open new avenues, point me at thus far unknown or unactualized ideas, such questions were also more restrictive and potentially suggestive. Generally, however, I believe that this type of interview structure was adequate: leaving the first, narrative part open matched the first thesis's premise that located gender in social relations rather than restricting it to a strangely disconnected, individual thematic space.[176] Simultaneously, the interviews remained suitably open so as to allow other studies (such as this one) to connect. Some of the most successful interviews already included explicitly gender-related topics within the narrative part, usually thanks to interviewees' attentiveness and interest. In interviews that didn't, the later part(s) at least enabled more specific debate of such themes. The connective question about my thesis topic's reception, meanwhile, allowed for structuring efforts to be undertaken within a certainly limited but still relatively open and heterogeneous thematic field.

[175] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 79.
[176] Also see Scott: Gender, 1055 and Griesebner: *Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 93–97 for discussion of such dangers.

The guide I used on my interview travels through the USA encompassed the following topics, inspired not least by a variety of music scene studies[177] and often embellished by handwritten additions and reminders:

- Getting into music?
- Various cities?
- Personal background and its relation to "scene(s)" (if any)?
- Own position within the field?
- Interview partner's contacts – men / women? Function?
- (Others') social background?
- Instruments and gender? Line-ups?
- Role of collectives? Personal relationships?
- How to keep in touch? Sources for info?
- How to position "Free Folk" (seen separately? Historical context?)
- "Free Folk" – freedom to / from what? Useful term?
- Matt Valentine: "Free Folk": "Free-thinking folk" / liberated people
- Changes / new quality in recent years?
- Role of the internet / new media / revival of "old media"?
- Specific aspects of American scene(s)? Any geographical aspects of importance? International connections?
- Title: "Gender Construction and American "Free Folk" Music(s)" – associations?
- How to describe gender situation?
- Personal experiences in relation to topic?
- Views / reflection on gender roles within the fields? Own views / reflection?
- Musician's / label owners' / … role in starting festivals / organising tours…
- Political / emancipatory spirit to field? Festivals? Magazines?
- DIY ethos?
- Punk – Prog / High Art – Low Art divide?
- New Weird America / Old Weird America? Tradition?
- References to musician's own work…
- Performance?
- Musical freedom?
- Lyrics?
- Reception / audience reaction?
- Festivals: how many men / women?
- Audience gender? Label heads, organisers, media, promoters, agents, studio staff…
- Other forms of inequality? Hierarchies? Possibilities for changes?[178]

My guide isn't entirely representative of how my interviews were structured. Some of these keywords were linked to questions that appeared in almost every interview, others were hardly used at all. Despite interviews' general similarities, weighting and exact structure differed from case to case; perceiving mistakes in interviews could lead to the missing aspects returning more forcefully in later conversations.

Froschauer and Lueger also impacted my analysis of the interview transcripts[179], although the type of analysis most adequate to that particular thesis is not the one most

[177] cf. for example Bayton, Mavis: *Frock Rock. Women Performing Popular Music* (Oxford / New York 1998); Cohen, Sara: Men Making a Scene. Rock music and the production of gender, in: Whiteley, Sheila (ed.): *Sexing the Groove. Popular music and gender* (London / New York 1997), 17–36.

[178] I already included this guide in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 81.

favored by them. Froschauer and Lueger's approach aims at a study of the rules of communication, of contexts and structures of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhänge / Sinnstrukturen*) and thus the analysis of "collective dynamics"[180]: "interview material manifests human practice; by analyzing and interpreting these texts, researchers attempt to access and understand these 'objectivations'."[181] A variety of basic components for analysis are introduced so as to enable the handling of one's perspectivity[182] and prior knowledge, the material needs to be deconstructed (for adequate interpretation, taking nothing for granted) and differentiated comparatively (involving contextualization and recombination of the deconstructed materials), while communicative selectivity needs to be considered: the specific dynamics and premises of the conversation. Knowledge of the field of research as well awareness of interviews' contexts and interviews' sequentiality are key. In my analysis, I attempted to secure its quality by – as Froschauer and Lueger suggest – not focusing on individual, fixed readings of materials, never taking my interpretations for granted, and attempting to remain aware of as many (social, factual, temporal) factors shaping the conversations as possible. Three perspectives are foundational for the types of analyses presented by Froschauer and Lueger: "The world can be conceived of as interlocked, interdependent systems and subsystems", "[t]he social surroundings can only be accessed indirectly, and this access is limited", "[i]nterpretation needs to take place step by step."[183] Here, awareness of contexts and one's perspective is emphasized again, as is precise and reflective work.

I settled on the *Themenanalyse*[184] (theme analysis) type which allows for the handling of great amounts of text (as was and is the case for my theses) and focuses on manifest content (which I tried to go beyond somewhat). It is hard to access structures of meaning through its use, but I tried to keep my approach towards the manifest content, which is easily gathered and laid out through *Themenanalyse*, as multi-dimensional as possible. Froschauer and Lueger present two strategies that can be applied in a *Themenanalyse*: the reduction / summary of interview material and the coding thereof. While the former allows a structuring of crucial elements of an interview and its

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[179] cf. Froschauer and Lueger's relevant chapters on basics and practice of analysis can be found in Das qualitative Interview, 80–106 and 107–165. Witzel: The Problem-Centered Interview, [19]–[26], includes interesting remarks on interviews' analysis as well which are mostly quite compatible with Froschauer and Lueger's approach; I will thus neglect these parts of Witzel's text here.
[180] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 85, based on Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 82.
[181] Spiegel: Gender construction, 86, based on Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 82.
[182] Also see Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 18–19.
[183] Spiegel: Gender construction, 87.
[184] cf. Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 158–165; also see 100–103 and 107–111.

argumentation, internal differences as well as an opening up of themes, the latter involves "a deeper analysis of the […] notional structures of themes and their contexts"[185] and the deduction of categories. Various categories are introduced into the analysis through coding; the researcher analyzes themes so as to understand their own terms; categories are structured so as to (re)situate themes within the actual interview and the research context. These categories and subcategories then make up a hierarchic network which is interpreted; a multi-level comparison of the various interviews at hand leads to the generation of theory.

My interview transcripts are extremely detailed.[186] There are upsides and downsides to such a level of detail – in the short run, the actual transcription work (which took me a very long time[187]) and analytical access will be complicated, but in the long run, a unique and sustainable archive will exist. I used the *ATLAS.ti* software to analyze the interview material. This took place mostly through the application of codes (84 in total, some pre-defined, not least according to my interview guideline, some introduced during analysis work) to quotations. The software serves as a virtual workbench[188]:

> The *Textual Level* includes activities like segmentation of data files; coding text, image, audio, and video passages; and writing memos. The *Conceptual Level* focuses on model-building activities such as linking codes to networks. A third and equally important aspect is the management of projects and the data.[189]

For my new thesis, I mostly relied on the first thesis's coding system. Having spent good parts of the last few years juggling these transcripts, I mainly refreshed my knowledge of their contents, inserting helpful ATLAS.ti memos *en masse* along the way, and went through lists of quotations to which specific codes had been assigned – most notably the 'politics' code, which played a major role for the construction of chapter 5.2, certainly the chapter in this new thesis that is the most reliant on interview quotations. Generally, analysis matched my *Politikwissenschaft* supervisor's initial ideas, according to which "the interviews should be analyzed internally, carving out their own dynamics and characters, as well as compared to each other."[190] The

[185] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 88, based on Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 163.
[186] See Froschauer / Lueger: *Das qualitative Interview*, 223–224, for guidelines to transcription work.
[187] Taking so long to / getting stuck attempting to complete my transcripts, I received help from a translation agency.
[188] cf. *ATLAS.ti User's Guide. User's Manual for ATLAS.ti 5.0, 2nd Edition* (Berlin 2004), 1. Download from http://www.atlasti.com/manual.html. Last accessed: August 24, 2011.
[189] Ibid., 25. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[190] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 91.

quotations I ended up using were included in different ways, depending on chapters' approach: while chapters 3 and 4 were (mostly) built along the lines of key texts and further literature, with quotations often being inserted into larger, already existing amounts of text, the structure of chapter 5 is mostly constituted by interview and email quotations, quite comparable to the subchapters of my first thesis's empirical part (with its "implicitly interconnected islands of texts"[191]). While I think that this latter approach is the more potent one in the context of my greater research project, the approach used for most of chapters 3 and 4 has benefits of its own and enables a new / different perspective on the available material.

In November and December 2012, I sent out emails describing my project and asking for interviewees' contributions. Here is a representative example:

> Dear Britt,
>
> greetings from increasingly wintery Vienna, I hope you're doing fine! I've been busy working on my second diploma thesis (working title: "Politics and American 'Free Folk' music(s)", closing my history studies), the deadline for which is January 31 -- quite soon, it's gonna be a shorter one. Building on certain aspects of the first thesis, I will be discussing political potentials and potentialities in these (dynamic and heterogeneous) fields, putting them into cultural-historical context: I am applying certain selected key texts on past music scenes to the scenes discussed in my first thesis, not aiming for a description of those fields alongside party-political lines but rather trying to discuss questions of power (relations) and to trace connections to and potentials for political activity in a broader sense.
>
> Thus, I wanted to ask you for two things:
>
> 1. I've been going through the interviews conducted in 2009 again and would like to include some of the as yet unused bits in my new thesis (in some cases, already used / published quotes will be in there too). As this is a new thesis with a new topic and, like the last one, will be available online and in uni libraries, I want to be sure that the interviewees are fine with further quotes being published and thus wanted to ask you for confirmation. Like a year ago, I would then at some point (early January?) send you the "new" quotes so you have about two weeks to comment on them if you want. If you're fine with that, it would be helpful if you could tell me as soon as possible -- a quick "yes" should suffice and would help me plan the final text.
>
> 2. I'd like to ask you a few more questions that, if you have the time and feel like it, you can answer / discuss in whatever form and at whatever length you prefer. They are similar to most of the 2009 interviews' later parts, asking for people's personal impressions on certain topics that might point me in interesting directions etc.
> Somewhat related questions were asked back then already, but I think it would be interesting to read interviewees' impressions in 2012, with that new thesis topic in mind. If you could send a reply over the next month -- say, before the end of the year -- that would be awesome.
>
> -- What comes to mind when you consider this thesis's topic -- politics, political activities, power relations etc. in American underground musics / in the musical-social fields you move in?
>
> -- Have you been politically active in any way (especially in contexts related to music)? Do you know of others involved in these musics who have been? Also feel free to compare how these

[191] Ibid., 92.

> aspects have developed over time. I am consciously not defining "political" in detail here -- I'm also interested in interviewees' own takes on what they consider political.
>
> Thanks for any comments / contributions! If you have any questions, just ask.
>
> […]
> All the best + talk to you soon,
> Max[192]

Responses generally were positive – no one actively denied me the use of further quotes, and some interviewees sent answers of varying length to my additional questions. Some interviewees were interested in sending answers but lacked time, while a few felt too distanced from the topic or the scene(s) in question to be able to reply. Some interviewees didn't reply at all; non-replies could imply anything from lack of interest to lack of time, but I hope / don't think anyone refused to reply out of dissatisfaction with the first paper. At the very least, I have yet to encounter any such negative feedback.

The emails I received aren't to be taken as equivalent to the quotes from 2009 I am using. This isn't a value judgment but rather an analytical / methodological distinction. While I don't want to exaggerate questions of spontaneity by postulating that qualitative interviews conducted in person offer a more direct access to 'natural', authentic selves, such interview situations' (potential / desired) openness is probably preferable for researchers eager to analyze structures of meaning manifest therein. While I attempted to keep the new questions (as quoted above) open, they nonetheless offered the interviewed an opportunity to reply through a premeditated statement. I do believe that such statements are connectable to the body of material collected through qualitative interviews, but they are nonetheless materials of an order different to that of our conversations in 2009, for better or worse. They certainly are far removed from the group interview's challenging but desirable situation.

While 2009's interviews remain key to this thesis's general conception of the field of research and to the more specific heterogeneous connections traced throughout it, and while recent emails add to the material thus amassed, these aren't the paper's sole material. In addition to the reappropriation of texts already searched out for *Gender construction*, I also rely on newly collected artifacts here. The research of online interviews with and articles on these scenes' protagonists, primarily my interviewees, was successful insofar as it gave me a much better overview of the abundance of

[192] Personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (November 22, 2012).

material that is available and will be useful for later, more expansive projects; it was also interesting to realize what gaps, spikes and asymmetries in coverage can be encountered and could potentially be analyzed. Popularity and age both appear to affect the availability of such materials – a truism, certainly, but well-related to some of the generational / historiographic aspects that will be mentioned in chapter 3.2. In this particular thesis, only a small amount of material appears, that which seemed most fitting. My attempt at finding useful material in past issues of *The Wire* was a similar case – many interesting ideas were found, some of which illustrate important points elaborated later in this thesis. For a while, I considered assigning a more central part to my trawling of the magazine's most recent decade, but as the deadline drew closer and I found myself focusing more on my 2009 interviews again, I left certain chronological gaps in my research of the magazine wide open while still at least having additional material of great interest to work on.

Having realized that my initial plan to broadly compare the scenes I am discussing to past scenes' politics would require an abundance of material and would be pretty much undoable in a standard diploma thesis still adhering to the quality standards I hope to be setting for my work, I decided to concentrate on selected key texts instead. With the exception of Branden W. Joseph's *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* which, as has already been shown, is of great import to my project, my selection of key texts seems almost arbitrary in retrospect – an assumed arbitrariness also informed by my knowledge that no choice would enable me to offer a perfect or holistic portrait of a past scene. Nonetheless, I think these texts were chosen with good reason – they all offer very different perspectives on a variety of different musics / musical practitioners, all from the 1960s and all (though not determinedly) related to the scenes I am discussing in one way or another. In the end, these texts serve as impulses for a range of discussions of interrelated micro- and sometimes macropolitical aspects related to these scenes. Comparisons will be made, but they shouldn't be expected to result in comprehensive analogies and contrasts. Rather, by the end of this text, my project's tracing of these musical-social fields will have become denser. These densities are fragile and unstable – some more than others, but even the more speculative parts should shed interesting lights on the field of research, hopefully leading the way towards more expansive future projects.

3.4 Interviewees / some remarks[193]

Closing the chapter, I want to include a list of interviewees; it is an updated version of the list found in *Gender construction*[194]. All of these interviews took place in 2009:

1. London, UK, May 19: Phil McMullen, editor of the UK-based *Ptolemaic Terrascope* magazine that spawned the Terrastock festivals.

2. Vienna, Austria, June 21: Eric Arn, former member of Crystalized Movements, member of Primordial Undermind, active solo under his own name and in various collaborative / improvisatory contexts.

3. Graz, Austria, June 26: Spencer Clark, member of The Skaters, active solo as Monopoly Child Star Searchers, Fourth World Magazine et al.

4. Graz, Austria, June 27: Labanny Bly, former member of Orgiaztech, active solo as P.A.R.A and recently as Labanna Babalon; Paul LaBrecque, former member of Bright et al., member of Sunburned Hand Of The Man and The Other Method, active solo as Head Of Wantastiquet.[195]

5. New York City, NY, July 8: Samara Lubelski, member of Chelsea Light Moving former member of Hall Of Fame, Tower Recordings et al., plays with MV & EE et al., member of Metabolismus, Metal Mountains, active solo under her own name.

6. New York City, NY, July 8: Karl Bauer, former member of Windsor For The Derby et al., active in various collaborative / improvisatory contexts and (mostly) solo as Axolotl.

7. Brattleboro, VT, July 12: Matt Valentine, former member of Memphis Luxure and Tower Recordings, member of MV & EE, active solo, runs the Child Of Microtones and Heroine Celestial Agriculture labels with Erika Elder. During the interview, Ron Schneiderman (see below) joined us.

8. Brattleboro, VT, July 13: Ron Schneiderman, former member of Pudding Maker, member of Coal Hook, Green Hill Builders, The Other Method, Sunburned Hand Of The Man et al., plays with MV & EE, active solo and in various collaborative / improvisatory contexts, runs the Spirit Of Orr label, runs Surefire Distribution.

9. Doylestown, PA, July 15: Natalie Mering, former member of Jackie-O Motherfucker, active solo as Weyes Blood.

10. Philadelphia, PA, July 16: Eric Carbonara, active as a solo acoustic instrumentalist and in collaborations, for example with Jesse Sparhawk.

11. Orwigsburg, PA, July 17: Tara Burke, former member of Un et al., member of Anahita, Tau Emerald, The Valerie Project, active solo as Fursaxa.

12. Pittsburgh, PA, July 18: Mike Tamburo, former member of Meisha and Arco Flute Foundation, active solo under his own name and as Brother Ong, runs the New American Folk Hero label.

13. Pittsburgh, PA, July 19: Jeffrey Alexander, former member of The Science Kit and The Iditarod, member of Black Forest / Black Sea and Dire Wolves, active solo, artistic director at AS220 and festival director at Terrastock 6 in Providence, RI; Miriam Goldberg, member of

[193] Similar remarks on the thesis's final form can be found in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 91–98.
[194] Ibid., 94–96.
[195] The artists interviewed in Graz performed at the Karneval im Lande der Cetacean festival there: Karneval im Land der Cetacean, in: *Absolutely Free*. http://af.g03.net/output/?e=240&page=index&a=prog&b=programm&c=b0e92a50. Last accessed: December 20, 2011.

Black Forest / Black Sea, former member of The Iditarod; both interviewees ran the Secret Eye label.

14. Oakland, CA, July 21: Eva Saelens, former member of Alarmist and Jackie-O Motherfucker, member of We Like Cats, active solo as Inca Ore.

15. San Francisco, CA, July 22: Evan Caminiti, member of Barn Owl and Higuma, active solo under his own name and as Painted Caves.

16. San Francisco, CA, July 24: Glenn Donaldson, former member of Mirza, member of The Blithe Sons, FWY!, Horrid Red, The Skygreen Leopards, Thuja et al., active solo under various guises (The Birdtree, The Ivytree). Ran the Jewelled Antler label with Loren Chasse.

17. San Francisco, CA, July 24: Sharon Cheslow, former member of Chalk Circle, Bloody Mannequin Orchestra et al., founder / member of Coterie Exchange, active solo and in various collaborative / improvisatory contexts. Runs the Decomposition label and publisher, publishes the *Interrobang?!* anthology.

18. Los Angeles, CA, July 26: Chris Moon, former member of MCMS, formerly active solo as Yermo. Runs the Last Visible Dog label.

19. Los Angeles, CA, July 26: Britt Brown, former member of Pocahaunted and Weirdo Begeirdo, member of L.A. Vampires, Robedoor, Topaz Rags et al., runs the Not Not Fun label with Amanda Brown, writes for *The Wire*.

20. Austin, TX, July 28: Christina Carter, member of Charalambides and Scorces. Runs the Many Breaths label.

21. New York City, NY, July 30: Pete Nolan, member of GHQ, Magik Markers, Valley Of The Ashes, The Vanishing Voice et al., active solo and with others as Spectre Folk. Runs the Arbitrary Signs label.

22. Glasgow, UK, November 4–5: David Keenan, former member of 18 Wheeler and Telstar Ponies, member of Taurpis Tula and Tight Meat, writes for *The Wire* and as a book author; Heather Leigh Murray, former member of Charalambides, member of Jailbreak, Scorces and Taurpis Tula, active solo under her own name; both interviewees run the Volcanic Tongue store and label in Glasgow.

Most quotations used in this thesis went through a variety of incarnations. As my raw transcripts are very detailed, the contingencies of spoken language can make some of these utterances hard to read in their original transcribed form. For that reason, and thinking that many interviewees might prefer or might be more used to having their words appear in print in edited form, I 'streamlined' most quotes, like I had for *Gender construction*. I removed (perceived) redundancies while attempting to keep them somewhat close to the original impression, the conversation's dynamics. As some interviewees asked for further edits (to remove instances of 'like', 'you know' and other such perceived redundancies), I did just that, also in the cases of some interviewees who hadn't asked for such edits, so as to keep the use of quotations consistent. In some cases, interviewees sent me their own edits; I have marked these quotes with references to the correspondences that involved the sending of these versions. The general lack of full stops is intentional and hints at the missing context, the conversational flow from

which these quotations were cut, and such interview situations' tentativeness and incompleteness. Emphases in the interview quotes are attempts at capturing spoken emphasis encountered on the recordings. Email quotes were handled in ways quite different: as they are written statements, I edited them to (mostly) fit the thesis's layout and removed obvious spelling mistakes or adjusted the use of capitalization. Some of these quotes were used already in *Gender construction* and return here for emphasis, better description of an aspect of the field or recontextualization. For greater traceability, I have attempted to point out their respective contexts, or at least their moments of use, in the text or (mostly) in footnotes; I hope this is a complete set of connections.

3 Visiting the Dream Syndicate

Branden W. Joseph's *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* has become, quite simply, one of my favorite books due to its intriguing subject matter, unimpeachably political and complexity-aware approach and its catalytic role for my first diploma thesis and my larger project. In *Gender construction*, I focused on its theoretical and methodological implications as encountered in its first chapter. Here, I will introduce certain themes and concepts thus far uninvestigated – not through a genuine close reading, but nonetheless in order to improve my understanding of the book and to increase the density of some of the research field's parts.

3.1 The text

As explained in chapter 2.3, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* is not so much a biography of artist / filmmaker / musician / theorist Tony Conrad but a 'minor history' that locates Conrad in and follows him through a variety of contexts – of 'scenes', even. In his first chapter[196], Joseph sets out by writing about Conrad's appearance at Documenta 1997 – interviewed for / actively performing a video as part of Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler's *The Poetics Project*. This is contrasted with and set in relation to Conrad's earlier Documenta involvement in 1972, during which he was responsible for the electronics of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's Dream House installation ("a room in which a single complex chord filled a space tinted by Zazeela's specially designed lighting, an environment that would now be understood as a species of 'sound art.'"[197]) and joined Young and Zazeela in the Theatre of Eternal Music's performances. Conrad himself had been among the founding members of the original group of the same name. 25 years later, *The Poetics Project* dealt with a group founded by Kelley and Oursler, neither quite art project nor band, and put into question linear, dominant histories[198] working through easy categorizations, and it is here that 'minor history' first enters the picture.

Joseph continues by covering Conrad's earlier work in the Theatre of Eternal Music in the mid-1960s, whose rigid use of just intonation tuning challenged the dominance – and, notably, status as that which is given – of "the prejudices of Western harmonic

[196] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 11–58.
[197] Ibid., 11.
[198] cf. ibid., 12–22

music"[199]. At the same time, the Theatre of Eternal Music's work and practice presented one way of engaging with the legacy of John Cage – a theme very much present throughout the book. Conrad's more recent *Early Minimalism* project, like *The Poetics Project*, tackles questions of history – and authorship. A long-running conflict between Young (and Zazeela) on the one hand and Conrad (and fellow Theatre of Eternal Music member John Cale, also of The Velvet Underground) on the other is discussed by Joseph as tied to greater lines of conflict between Conrad and Young, to "things that are different *in kind*, situating themselves on opposite sides of a whole series of interrelated questions of authorship, history, the institution and, ultimately, power."[200] Young has refused to release the Theatre of Eternal Music's recordings stored by him as long as his claim to authorship – indeed, to the role of composer – isn't accepted by Conrad (and Cale), in whose view the group was a collaborative endeavor. Young himself is very much accepted as an author, not least as one of the originators of musical minimalism. Conrad's *Early Minimalism*, via Michel Foucault's elaborations on history and authorship, thus questions this positing of "Young, or more particularly, some manifestation of Young as a specific author-function"[201] in major histories and suggests a different discursive centre, reinitiating the discourse of minimalism. As Joseph points out, Conrad's project implicitly "open[s] both Young's and Conrad's work up to a broader and more significant (or at least different) set of questions and concerns", such as:

> What is included or excluded within the corpus of Young's or Conrad's work? What or who is included or excluded from the history of minimalism? What divides or determines the boundaries of that history as musical composition, artistic practice, or, perhaps, both?[202]

Joseph connects these thoughts back to the 'minor history' proposed by Kelley and Oursler and outlines the concept as summarized in this paper's chapter 2.1, where I have pointed out its implications and galvanizing importance for my theses and the larger project at hand.

Beyond the Dream Syndicate's second chapter[203] deals with contributions to

[199] Ibid., 31.
[200] Ibid., 37. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[201] Ibid., 42.
[202] Ibid., 47.
[203] Ibid., 59–108.

> the transformation from a "natural" to a "social" and potentially collective point of view, a social turn that would come to characterize the general ethos of both minimalism and Fluxus, as well as the more overtly communist projects of George Maciunas, Henry Flynt, and others, eventually including [Cornelius] Cardew.[204]

Here, Joseph starts out from Conrad's, Young's, Flynt's and others' time as students – a time when numerous key agents discussed in *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* first met and when they encountered and engaged with then-recent or -current artistic developments that are of particular import to Joseph's book, notably the work of John Cage. Joseph follows Conrad's travels through Europe, which included an encounter with Karlheinz Stockhausen, as well as his compositional activities after his return to the USA. Several of Conrad's interests apparent here could, as Joseph points out[205], serve as constants in a major history, a linear narrative of Conrad's development. An aspect like rhythm / pitch interaction might serve as "the kernel from which all minimal music derived", and the meeting and early interaction of Young and Conrad could be named "a point of synthesis or conjunction" that "foreshadow[s] their later, mutual development of a musical genre."[206]

> Either approach, however, would again verge on a metaphysics, eliminating the historical contingencies by which Conrad's (and minimalism's) development actually transpired. Conrad's route from Stockhausen to *The Flicker* was not linear or direct, but defined by swerves and detours, conflicts and alliances, emulations and collaborations. If a major history would render them as *in*fluences, turning or folding them into the construction of a consistent, stable, and unified artistic subject, the role of a minor history is to turn them *out* in order that the larger network of intersecting positions can be mapped, realized, and understood.[207]

Here, Joseph once again clarifies the potentials of a minor history and its place within his own study. I consider these points crucial to my own understanding of my theses' field of research and will endeavor to apply some of them in chapter 3.2.

Following on from here, Joseph interrogates Conrad's and Young's engagement with Cage's work. Criticizing simplistic portrayals of Cage, Joseph argues for a deepened understanding of those implications of Cage's work that "formed the backdrop against which the aesthetic positions developed (variously) within the network of which Young and Conrad were a part would play themselves out."[208] I will return to these implications in chapter 3.3, attempting to trace some of these ideas' and practices' connectability to recent American underground musics. Conrad, Young and their peers

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[204] Ibid., 101.
[205] cf. ibid., 73–74.
[206] Ibid., 73.
[207] Ibid., 74. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[208] Ibid., 77.

would face these implications in numerous ways upon which Joseph goes on to focus. It is chiefly through examination of Young's irreducible, often overlooked word and event scores that Joseph arrives at the idea of a 'social turn', as quoted earlier. Young's engagement with Cage's work was intensive but not always affirmative, and indeed: in Young's *Compositions 1960 #3* and *#4*, "[i]nstead of identifying with nature or the outside, Young's audience was placed in a situation more conducive to a certain degree of self-reflexive consciousness of their actions as a collective." This established one possible path away from the Cagean project. Joseph closes the chapter with a tracing of at the time (seemingly) minor differences between Conrad and Young with regards to the upholding of certain aspects or elimination of "compositional action"[209] that are very much present in the Theatre of Eternal Music's story and the later controversies surrounding its legacy. This allows Joseph to draw parallels between Conrad's understanding of the 'Dream Syndicate' and certain decidedly improvisational groups like AMM.

The third chapter, "The Tower and the Line"[210], opens by analyzing and contextualizing further pieces of Young's, notably ones like *Composition 1960 #10* and *2 Sounds* which contrast intention and actual performance / result. Cage's reception of pieces like these is connected to Young's own thoughts, suggesting that Young, unlike Cage, attempted a return to transcendence, a debate that will be of interest to this thesis later on. Joseph

> examine[s] […] the comparatively lesser-known relationship of [artist Robert] Morris's work to Young's, the manner in which they both instantiated, in their own way, the same dialectical relation between temporality and form, contingency and abstraction, process and object, immanence and transcendence.[211]

Morris's and Young's works shared many similarities, but Morris "emphasized *resistance* over identification or capitulation"[212]. Said resistance to "an indissoluble, repressive, transpersonal structure or form"[213] through subversion differs, argues Joseph, from Cage's utopianism, although both conceived of power as sovereign. While Joseph grants that there was good reason to confront sovereignty, he also clarifies power's multiplicity (as mentioned in chapter 2.1). Even at a time when Morris conceived of power as sovereign, his own sculptures staged both "the despotic form and

[209] Ibid., 104.
[210] Ibid., 109–151.
[211] Ibid., 121.
[212] Ibid., 127. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[213] Ibid., 131–132.

the disciplined body"[214], thus involving or modeling different but coexistent types of power. Young, however, approached disciplinary power by aspiring to an ideal of precision pursued while "giving oneself up to the sound"[215]. Views of the Theatre of Eternal Music's practice obviously differed within the actual group:

> With the Theatre of Eternal Music, we enter upon a realization that appears all the more dangerous or disturbing for being true: that, as against any clear-cut separation of repression and freedom, power and desire are inextricably intertwined, not opposed, but inherently ambivalent, caught up in different assemblages and made to move toward different ends and different goals – crystallized in transcendent form or moving out ever further in different directions (which is why, among other things, it is not possible to simply oppose Young and Conrad to each other).[216]

Joseph's fourth chapter[217] largely discusses the work of Conrad's peer Henry Flynt, whereas the fifth[218] starts out with an elaboration on Conrad's connection to The Velvet Underground – that is, his membership in The Primitives – but uses it to draw a line towards Conrad's involvement with filmmaker Jack Smith. While both chapters are highly interesting, they are less focused on music and, despite certainly extant connection (at least of influence) between the scenes discussed here and these artists, will largely be left out of my text, not least to keep it at a reasonable length.

Conrad's film *The Flicker*, its production and context are at the centre of the sixth chapter[219]. It is "a thirty-minute film that, aside from its opening titles, consists entirely of black-and-white (or, rather, clear) frames, alternating in a series of patterns to create stroboscopic effects."[220] Joseph investigates a multitude of possible contextualizations for the film. Its very reception changed rapidly – its shock seemed to wear off to a certain extent, giving way to curiosity and interest. Arts / film histories have found a variety of ways to integrate The Flicker. The film's story is told in detail, also thanks to Joseph's access to Conrad's notebooks. What is of particular interest to Joseph, however, is its staging of power relations, its recognition of new forms, even paradigms of power. Conrad's work (including his "investigation into techniques of perceptual and neurophysiological stimulation"[221]) comes into contact with post-fordist shifts' in the arts' (potential) alignment and function, with their "liberatory potentials"[222] being

[214] Ibid., 135.
[215] Ibid., 137.
[216] Ibid., 142.
[217] Ibid., 152–212.
[218] Ibid., 213–278.
[219] Ibid., 279–352.
[220] Ibid., 279.
[221] Ibid., 301.
[222] Ibid., 303–304.

joined by their newly discovered pioneering functions for advanced capitalism. Joseph traces ideas of then-new developments in cinema through the work of Gilles Deleuze and Jonas Mekas (and the "subjective transformation" the latter "sensed […] was at stake" but considered "profoundly ambivalent"[223]) and arrives at Brion Gysin and Ian Sommerville's "Dream Machine", inspired by William S. Burroughs, theorist of control, and its use of strobe for a Burroughsian deconditioning by

> so exceeding perceptual norms and parcelizing habitual association lines as to open up a complex, variegated, and differential form of perception and, ultimately, thought that would effectively counter perceptual and ideological standardization.[224]

The Theatre of Eternal Music once again enters the story – this time through those techniques that involved a tuning of instruments to machines' hum and the electrical current's frequency, and the implications of such technique. Both *The Flicker* and the Theatre of Eternal Music worked towards "a counterhegemonic perceptual experience" which, however, was more oriented towards an opening up, more about a "transgressive, heterotopic encounter with the outside"[225] in *The Flicker*'s case. With more affirmatively hegemonic uses of perceptual stimulation appearing around the same time (like Joseph's example here, regulatory biomusic) and competing for "the regulation of attention", *The Flicker* tackled new forms of power, "opposing new forms of regulation with a new type of thought"[226]. Joseph closes the book with a "Conclusion"[227] that follows some of Conrad's further (film-related) work.

Connections between Conrad's surroundings (including La Monte Young, Henry Flynt, Angus MacLise and others) and the scenes discussed here can be found on a ridiculous variety of levels; I will not trace them here, although such tracings might be of potentially great import for a more detailed study. That there *is* influence can already be gleaned from the introductory remarks on these scenes; a proper, adequate tracing would have exploded a thesis that is already far longer than expected. Rather, I will illustrate these connections – or rather, these predecessors' presence – with a few quotes and remarks. Natalie Mering mentions Young while discussing her interest in "the archetypes of music that you find within like perfect fifths, early music, La Monte

[223] Ibid., 305.
[224] Ibid., 312.
[225] Ibid., 340.
[226] Ibid., 349.
[227] Ibid., 353–365.

Young's, you know, drone music, eastern music", her own project being "making that marriage happen" between two elements: "the yang being the solar energetic melodic remembered music and then the yin being the random new sound, sound effect"[228]. Mike Tamburo talks about changes in audience and technology:

> I think that the listener base has really grown, which I, I feel has lots to do with file sharing, I have a La Monte Young record that cost me like 200 dollars, in order to hear La Monte Young you had to spend 200 dollars ten years ago, at this point you can go and download a La Monte Young record (MS laughs), and then you have that, at your fingertips, and so you're able to absorb that[229]

Evan Caminiti recounts certain aspects of Barn Owl's earlier development: "Jon [Porras] and I were kind of getting into the psych folk type stuff a lot, at the time, and then, we were playing more structured, songy type elements at first, with a big Fahey influence" leading to the idea of

> oh, like what about Fahey with drones", or something, and then I would start to get, really into La Monte Young and, at first more than listening to any of his music reading his essays and theories on the philosophy of extended duration and drone and, psychological effects […][230]

Caminiti and Porras "both got deep into that" and wanted to create a fusion between the "folk-rooted elements" and "drone elements", which went on to be influenced by their respective pasts in "heavier music and distortion"[231]. Young is definitely of important presence in these scenes, notably among the drone contingent.

Eric Arn enjoys the cross-pollination of academic and underground music circles in Vienna, suggesting that this might be less present in the United States. Replying to a somewhat naïve question of mine that invoked 1960s New York minimalism as a prominent example of such musics feeding into the scenes I am discussing here, Arn says:

> Absolutely, there are plenty of people in the underground scene who, who will idolize that stuff and pick up ideas, strategies from it, but you don't see Terry Riley playing at a Terrastock (MS: Yeah), OK, you never will (laughs), so it's more of a one-way thing, you know, we can always buy those records and hear what they were doing and work on that but it's not a lot of active cross-pollination, which I see here[232]

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[228] Interview with Natalie Mering (Doylestown, July 15, 2009).
[229] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).
[230] Interview with Evan Caminiti (San Francisco, July 22, 2009).
[231] Ibid.
[232] Interview with Eric Arn (Vienna, June 21, 2009).

However, Tony Conrad himself (admittedly one never to be reduced to categorizations) has, for example, performed with Burning Star Core's C. Spencer Yeh[233] and was invited to play the All Tomorrow's Parties Festival curated by Animal Collective[234] in 2011. The influence of artists encountered in Beyond the Dream Syndicate might be most obvious in the musical trope of the drone so common to many (though certainly not all) of these musics. This is particularly overt in descriptions of Virginia-based band Pelt as "the hillbilly Theater Of Eternal Music"[235].

But it's not just the Dream Syndicate's members that will appear in this chapter, so it is useful to have a few references on interviewees' parts at hand. John Cage's work was among those musics Eric Carbonara encountered in his college's music listening libraries.[236] Mike Tamburo narrates how in college, already knowing who Cage was but not much about him, he

> had taken out a book from the library and fortunately this library had the greatest record collection that I've maybe ever seen, and you could just sit there and listen to records or you could take records out, and I started getting heavily into minimalism, through reading this book, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, […] so, I started just listening and absorbing and absorbing, all of this music, you know, things that were just *really* blowing my mind and making me see that there were just *so* many possibilities, in what you could do with music[237]

I want to reconnect this to a not explicitly Cagean quote to illustrate the importance of music's *openness* to many musicians in these scenes. Eva Saelens is very fond of WFMU's archives of Pat Conte and Citizen Kafka's Secret Museum of the Air[238], featuring 78s from Afria, Asia and South America:

> There's something about someone, a kind of music being just so naturally different from yours, rather than, people *efforting* to make music that makes you feel like it's different, you know? I'm just, I really am interested in how people expressed their emotions before globalization, I feel like western music really tries to set some standards for what's good, what's good music and what is not good music, and I feel like the contemporary music that I make and my peers make really pushes that aside, but I'm *very* interested in the music that people made before even

[233] cf. Tony Conrad / C. Spencer Yeh / Michael F. Duch: Musculus Trapezius, in: *Pica Disk*. http://www.lassemarhaug.no/picadisk/pica013.html. Last accessed: January 31, 2013.
[234] cf. ATP CURATED BY ANIMAL COLLECTIVE - LINE UP, in: *All Tomorrow's Parties*. http://www.atpfestival.com/events/atpanimalcollective/lineup.php. Last accessed: January 31, 2013.
[235] Keenan, David: Incredible String Band, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Sound And Music* 344 (October 2012), 32.
[236] cf. interview with Eric Carbonara (Philadelphia, July 16, 2009). Also see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 109, where Carbonara's university experiences are contextualized within a discussion of (university) education's impact on interviewees.
[237] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).
[238] cf. Secret Museum of the Air with Citizen Kafka and Pat Conte: Archives, in: *WFMU*. http://wfmu.org/playlists/SM. Last accessed: January 23, 2013.

> western values were imposed on them, so that's why I love these international 78s, they just move me *so much*, and, it just reminds me that like the potential, music's potential is limitless[239]

As I wrote in Gender construction, "what makes these connections and mutual interests work are (mind)sets of aesthetic potentialities."[240]

3.2 Diversion: minor histories of American psychedelic underground musics?

While this thesis, vaguely defined as it may be, isn't an attempt at writing an actual history of 'free folk', there are lessons to be learned from *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* that might be well-explained or -applied through the sketching out of possible histories of these scenes. Is it even possible to write a 'minor history' of free folk? The most obvious danger would be to subsume such a history under the major category of this one specific genre – something both theses are arguably guilty of doing. However, at the same time, I have been doing my best to keep even the term 'free folk' oriented towards the social and the dynamic, always suspended and not designating any essential traits. It is important to realize that there is nothing essential about free folk[241] as I am discussing it in these texts. That doesn't imply that it is entirely arbitrary – these scenes exist, but dynamically so, through what Joseph calls "specific networks and connections". They exist locally, trans-locally and virtually; all these levels, through their own heterogeneity, are bound to muddle up any linear history. Like the minor cultural sociology sketched out in *Gender construction*, a minor history of these scenes will have to trace dynamic, constantly changing maps and make its own trajectory obvious. Specific trajectories will have to be followed (especially interviewees') but, as my exposition of Joseph's work on Conrad has hopefully shown, not in order to paint them as highly singular and isolated[242] but so as to trace and point out their manifold connections. Writing a simplistic major history of these scenes[243] is entirely possible: maybe interesting ideas, arguments or facts could be gathered from a narrative that proposes a linear development of 'free folk' or the 'New Weird America' as starting at a given point and carrying certain, seemingly essential, traits right into the present, for example. I am sure such an approach could be interesting and worth reading too, but I

[239] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[240] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 194.
[241] cf. for example ibid., 45–46, 48.
[242] cf. Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 47–58.
[243] cf. ibid., 73–74 for similar arguments and ideas regarding the possible histories of Tony Conrad or even minimalism as a whole.

would prefer a tracing of these scenes, their becomings and tempi in all their complexity. As this is always linked to questions of power, it is political and potentially emancipatory in its undermining of that which is given. To call this new thesis a minor history of these scenes would miss the mark – it is, maybe, part of a project that can be considered a minor history's tracing, spatial and temporal. The following pages will interrogate a few options of these musical-social fields' historicization.

Gender construction already amounted to a lot of work aiming at an adequate contextualization of these musics. It lacked historical depth but didn't lack knowledge of the scenes' historicity. In some ways, this subchapter constitutes a slight return to the as yet unrealized phantom history thesis hinted at in *Gender construction*'s conclusion. Much less expansive than a full thesis manifesting that approach could have been, it will further condense, augment and modulate the always fragile tracings.

> For example, I feel I have mostly neglected factors of age. Related aspects certainly can be encountered within this *Politikwissenschaft* paper – musical lives' chronologies, various life phases' respective relevances, technological developments, influences and role models, generational gaps between labels – but to make them the type of aspect to be traced in such a thesis should allow for a dense articulation of their interplay. The aim isn't to write a "history of American 'free folk' music(s)" but to investigate those musics' becomings, changes and velocities. The thesis I am finishing here asked: how does gender manifest in these dynamic, heterogeneous connections? The next thesis will have to ask: how does historicity manifest in these dynamic, heterogeneous connections?[244]

Taking into consideration Lawrence Grossberg's elaborations on "modernism's privileging of time over space" in preparation for the laying out of his own cartographic methodology, it could be argued that whereas *Gender construction* focused more on spatial aspects, this subchapter (and to a lesser extent the thesis as a whole) tries to introduce further temporal considerations while avoiding the "construction of a temporal Totality"[245]. What could be considered a minor cultural sociology of recent and current scenes is, at least on first thought, relatively easy to imagine thanks to the temporal proximity of the research field (which isn't the same as an ahistorical field, however that could be conceived) and, thus, the availability even of seemingly ephemeral materials.

While there is temporal proximity, a minor history, or really any form of history dependent on an abundance of material and a detailed micro-level discussion, will find it much harder to recognize, reconstruct and connect its resources in this field. There are stories to be told and narratives to be laid out by musicians and other protagonists, there

[244] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 207.
[245] Grossberg: We Gotta Get out of This Place, 26. The discussion takes place on pages 25–27.

are record collectors and downloaders whose accumulated acquisitions provide large masses of material (of varying type, quality, differentiation). Yet at the same time, centralized, or centralizing, archives and institutions related to such cultural practices are rare as are, despite the relative / assumed popularity of reissues both analog and digital, their material, durable manifestations.

Also, this minor history needn't assume that its topic is necessarily constantly, let alone essentially, 'minor': similar to the "interaction of major and minor forces"[246] that Joseph conceives minimalism as, these scenes, even though they could arguably be described as 'minor' in their relation to established, rigid genre signifiers[247], are never free of major elements, hierarchic forces, quasi-archaic rigidities[248], attempts at mythologization[249] and (self-)categorization, (self-)reduction to specific traits, even ossification and other related aspects. Also, as I discussed in *Gender construction*, it might be possible to consider, for example, festivals and labels "knots of arborescence in rhizomes"[250].

It is difficult to historicize this assemblage, the field of research, heterogeneous as it is. However, every now and then, attempts of varying success can be encountered. They are, without a doubt, all extremely useful: none can be complete, but they all manage to shed light on these scenes from different perspectives. But what am I writing about – temporally? Sharon Cheslow recounts developments she noticed in the early 2000s:

> There was *so* much energy, everyone was *so* creative, and, you know, putting out their own cassettes, making their own little cassette packages, like, really creative, fur-covered cassette packages (laughs) and starting their own labels and I thought the email mailing lists were similar to fanzines, so there was this real conflux of people coming together, supporting one another creatively, trying to create community, and so that reminded me a *lot* of punk and hardcore, but what was *different* about it was that there was *more* emphasis on being experimental, and *more* emphasis on improvised music, and incorporating electronics[251]

Later, "I would say, around 2004, 2005 was when you really felt this explosion of people interested in noise and folk and improvised music". Discussing the openness felt

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[246] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 54.

[247] See, for example, my discussion of Not Not Fun Records. Spiegel, Maximilian: Rad Rhizomes: An Introduction to Not Not Fun Records, in: *Elevate Festival* (October 16, 2011). http://2011.elevate.at/en/detail/news/rad-rhizomes-not-not-fun-records-eine-einfuehrung/. Last accessed: December 26, 2011.

[248] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 203–205.

[249] Even Conrad himself "has recently engaged in aspects of his own mythologization" (Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* 40; cf. 375, endnote 61).

[250] Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 22. I proposed this in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 23, but later went on to consider Grossberg's concept of 'articulation' just as apt (cf. ibid., 171, 200–201).

[251] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (January 11, 2013). This part of the interview was already discussed in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 146.

in comparison to the punk-inflected hardness of the 1980s and 1990s, Cheslow suggests:

> I think it was a reaction to what was going on in this country, I mean you have to keep in mind, 9/11 happened, and I really do feel a lot of what happened was in reaction to 9/11, to Bush, to the war in Iraq, I mean that was really what brought us all together, was that we were all anti-Bush, we talked openly about it, we were anti-war and anti-Bush (SC and MS laugh)[252]

In *Gender construction*, I also wrote about the social relations constituting these ahierarchic, heterogeneous networks not least through the discussion of quotes by Paul LaBrecque who, among other things, mentions how "over the last ten years, all of a sudden, this network built up"[253]. Mike Tamburo recounts from his experiences in the late 1990s that

> the psych bands weren't really touring at that point, […] I mean there were some things going on, but it, it was a little bit harder then, and, I think that the music scene that has been brewing, that has become like the free folk scene, I think it was just beginning, like Charalambides were, starting to do stuff '96, '98, I think maybe even before that, but, they had just come on my radar, maybe around '96 or '97, but, bands like that that were a little bit more atmospheric, it just seemed like they, things were really just starting to brew and people were making the connections at that point that like, "oh, these people are doing cool things over here, we'll go play over here, you know, people are doing cool things over here, we'll go play there"[254]

I think it is of great relevance here to point out that Tamburo's use of 'free folk' may well have been inspired by my own use of the term. The quote cited here isn't meant to suggest that a definite, homogeneous, essential 'free folk' scene manifested but rather that a vague coalescence's development was felt. Glenn Donaldson doesn't feel particularly connected to the New England scenes around which the 'New Weird America' article revolved, but knows there are certain similarities besides the manifold differences:

> I guess that's it, some people have lumped us in with that (MS: Yeah), that world, with New Weird America and with, freak folk and stuff, free folk or whatever, there's definitely, something happening the last ten years that involves an eclectic kind of music, that's not… it's fully formed, but it doesn't have… traditional structures always, I think that's the best way to describe it[255]

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[252] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009). This also appears in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 187.
[253] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009). Partially quoted in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 133.
[254] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).
[255] Interview with Glenn Donaldson (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).

So, at least some of the interviewed feel that (then-?)recent years had seen the establishment of a certain trans-local density of musics similar in their aesthetics and approaches.

Having established this, it seems like a good idea to continue with themes already partially examined or hinted at in *Gender construction*. Interviewees Phil McMullen and David Keenan, both active on multiple levels in these scenes, both offered conceptualizations of these scenes' historicity. I have discussed those briefly in *Gender construction*[256]. To McMullen, 'free folk' "was always just one musical facet of a movement which the Terrascope was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time to reflect on, report on and in some ways instigate – as the success of the Terrastock festivals actively demonstrates."[257] But McMullen also seems to consider 'free folk' in terms more obviously related to musical genre than my theses do (while still referring to decidedly, maybe constitutively heterogeneous musics):

> I think my interpretation of 'free folk' is that folk music has its traditions, English folk, and the various different American folk, Appalachian folk and folk blues and all the various other things, there are traditions and there's certain things you don't do outside of those constraints the tradition dictates you mustn't do, free folk gives you the freedom to go apeshit on electric guitar and some tambour stuff partway through it, […] you play your folk music and then go mad... and maybe bring a bit of jazz in or whatever, and that, that's the freedom that it allows you[258]

McMullen then goes on to cite Irish band United Bible Studies as a particularly potent example of such tendencies. Earlier in the same interview, McMullen "suspect[s]" that 'free folk' is "one of those terms that come and go"[259], likening it to relatively short-lived terms like math-rock. In the context of an interview – the project's very first – that was very much preoccupied with questions on how to actually write on such musics, McMullen thus implies a certain continuity of experimental / psychedelic / underground music activity that is only inadequately, partially and temporarily grasped by such terms and concepts. One danger here might be to essentialize these underground activities, even to make them eternal. However, it is also a way of questioning any hype-oriented designation of scene identities.

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[256] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 138–139.
[257] Personal email correspondence with Phil McMullen (March 30, 2009). Already quoted in Spiegel: Gender construction, 138.
[258] Interview with Phil McMullen (London, May 19, 2009).
[259] Ibid.

In our interview, David Keenan discussed rock's "revolutionary trajectory"[260], of which groups like MV & EE and Charalambides, as well as Japan's Fushitsusha, are current examples – as he expands on this elsewhere, it seems beneficial to this thesis to consult some of those sources. Said trajectory, "shot down and gone underground some time in the late 60s/early 70s", has been kept alive by "subterranean thinktanks" who "regenerate the form." In fact, Matt Valentine and Charalambides, according to Keenan's Hair Police review cited here, occupy "inspired genre-of-one realms" as opposed to other "New Weird America groups" that have by the time of the article's writing (2008) "compromised their art [or] regressed into folk proper". Meanwhile, "the most influential underground groups of the past decade – Wolf Eyes, Double Leopards, The Skaters – moved further from established rock tongue with every release." Keenan calls the album reviewed, *Certainty Of Swarms*, "one of the most radical rock records of the post-noise age"[261] – a rare example of hope at a time of crisis for rock music. In his talk on guerilla media[262] at the Audio Poverty conference in Berlin a few months later, Keenan also mentions that he considers the musics primarily discussed there (that is, especially those included in the concept of 'free folk') rock music.[263] Numerous interesting points may be extracted here: while not all musical elements discussed are 'rock', rock music still seems to be central to, maybe constitutive of these hybrid genres as discussed by Keenan (Amanda Petrusich argues that with its greater visibility due to more popular performers' success, free folk "emerg[ed] as a valid (if still slightly confused) subgenre of independent rock"[264]). Without wanting to judge the accuracy of Keenan's concept of rock's revolutionary trajectory, I want to refer to an observation made, or conceptualized, by Lawrence Grossberg that needs to be seen in the context of Grossberg's theorization of the 'rock formation' and its various alliances[265]:

> From within any particular alliance, people assume that they can read the ability of rock to matter off the taste of the audience or the sound of the music. Consequently, alliances are constantly judging each other, placing particular alliances on either side of the line separating rock from entertainment […]. At certain moments, from certain places within the rock formation, these inauthentic alliances appear to define the dominant form of rock. The result is that the history of rock is always seen as a cyclical movement between high (authentic) and low

[260] Interview with David Keenan and Heather Leigh Murray (Glasgow, November 4–5, 2009). Already quoted in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 138.
[261] Keenan, David: Hair Police. Certainty Of Swarms, in: *The Wire* 296 (October 2008), 53.
[262] Keenan, David: AP Lecture, in: *audiopoverty. Internet Archive*, http://archive.org/details/ApLecture-DavidKeenan. Last accessed: January 12, 2013; Keenan, David: Guerilla Media, in: *Audio Poverty*, http://audiopoverty.de/?page_id=650. Last accessed: January 12, 2013.
[263] cf. Keenan: AP Lecture.
[264] Petrusich: *It Still Moves*, 243.
[265] cf. Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 129–239.

> (coopted) points, although different fans will disagree over which moments constitute the high and the low points.[266]

Again, this isn't a value judgment of Keenan's knowledgeable and passionate take on underground rock's history but an interesting comparison to be made. While the tracing of innovation and its relation to rock modes is important, it is necessary to keep in mind that the type of distinction outlined by Grossberg is not given in itself but a construction based on specific understandings of what constitutes innovation and / or authenticity. Such dividing lines are always difficult to draw. Jeremy Gilbert, referring to discussions on the validity of distinctions between 'mainstream' and 'underground', suggests that

> the distinction between those musical scenes and forms which *are*, and those which *are not*, dependent for their propagation not just upon commercial and promotional practices but upon institutions and processed oriented directly towards capital accumulation (notably, of course, as practiced by the major record companies) would seem to be a valid one here.[267]

In comparison, Keenan would certainly focus at least as much on modernist aesthetics and the multi-leveled benefits of 'guerilla media' (also see chapter 4.2). In *Gender construction*, discussing McMullen's statement and the comments Keenan made during our interview, I argued that

> Keenan and McMullen uncover relevant connections, opposition or even minoritarian tendencies that I think need to be conceptualized genealogically, along the lines of a minor history rather than as genuinely apparent series of musical descent.[268]

I think this assessment still holds, maybe particularly so if these musics are considered an alliance of the rock formation, with most musicians accessing[269] these musics from a broadly defined rock context (however fragile that may be). However, more so than in the early 1990s, when Grossberg published *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, the plurality of influences and inspirations continuously muddles the primacy of 'rock'. A study discussing the historicity of 'free folk' would thus also have to struggle (hopefully productively) with definitions of 'rock'. (And indeed, Jeremy Gilbert detects "sonic-affective similarities between recent dance musics and improvised musics", among which many of the artists here may be counted, and points out "how radically they

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[266] Ibid., 207.
[267] Gilbert, Jeremy: Capitalism, Creativity and Continuity in the Sonic Sphere, in: culturalstudies.org.uk. http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/creativity%20and%20continuity%20.pdf. Last accessed: January 22, 2013. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[268] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 138.
[269] cf. for example ibid., 106–108.

differ from the qualities and processes of those hegemonic musics of Western culture: the Classical-Romantic concert tradition and the late twentieth-century white Rock formation."[270])

This plurality ties in – to a certain extent – with another temporal aspect highlighted in one of the quotes cited above. The "post-noise age" mentioned by Keenan seems to suggest that there has been a move beyond noise as a genre, an idea that ties in with his article on what he calls 'Hypnagogic pop', a "post-Noise underground"[271] tendency that "draws its power from the 1980s pop culture into which many of the genre's players were born, and which is only now being factored into underground music as a spectral influence."[272] This take on the musical development of many musicians who are connectable to or contingent parts of my theses' field of research seems to best match the solo trajectories of Spencer Clark and James Ferraro, both formerly constituting The Skaters (I will return to interviewee Clark's conceptualization of his own work in chapter 3.3) but is also applied to artists like Pocahaunted, Zola Jesus, Gary War, Emeralds and others. The 1980s focus may serve generalization a bit too much and the basic concept of hypnagogia could, I think, be more powerful if first and foremost applied to the specifics of Clark's and Ferraro's musics, but there is a certain openness to be found in Keenan's argument that

> [w]ithout a serious critical agenda to dictate how it is 'supposed' to be interpreted or received, a decade's worth of 'worthless' art and culture is ripe for hallucinations, interpretations and the plundering of idiosyncratic personal canons.[273]

Here, it is worth referring once again[274] to Nick Southgate's "strategy of becoming an eclectic sound factory"[275], too, which articulated similar ideas less specifically and thus is more applicable to a stylistically diverse group, even generation, of artists.

Both Keenan and McMullen also show the constructedness of music history: against linear mainstream rock canons, Keenan pits a technology-supported questioning of

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[270] Gilbert, Jeremy: Becoming-Music: The Rhizomatic Moment of Improvisation, in: Buchanan, Ian / Swiboda, Marcel (eds.): *Deleuze and Music* (Edinburgh 2004), 126.
[271] Keenan: Childhood's end, 30.
[272] Ibid., 26.
[273] Ibid., 31.
[274] As I already did in my diploma thesis (Spiegel: Gender construction, especially 47–48) and my article on Not Not Fun Records (Spiegel, Maximilian: Rad Rhizomes: An Introduction to Not Not Fun Records, in: *Elevate Festival* (October 16, 2011). http://2011.elevate.at/en/detail/news/rad-rhizomes-not-not-fun-records-eine-einfuehrung/. Last accessed: December 26, 2011.).
[275] Southgate, Nick: Sun Araw. Ancient Romans, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 332 (October 2011), 60.

canons (Internet, CD reissues…) which inspired the DIY underground musicians whose activities he traces. Cross-pollination and 'joining the dots' are important: for example, Sonic Youth are mentioned as doing just that between ecstatic free jazz and wild garage rock in Keenan's Audio Poverty talk.[276] Phil McMullen describes the *Ptolemaic Terrascope*'s approach as a "broad way of looking at music"[277], unusual for its time. Discussing the many connections the *Terrascope* forged, he remarks that "that's why I feel strongly that these things don't exist in bubbles, there are always these cross-references and cross-paths and it all depends on who's holding the telescope, who's looking at it (MS: Yeah), and which way round you're holding the telescope"[278]. McMullen is aware that other magazines, founded later, would go on to take a similar approach. More recently, he himself has been trying to figure out how to deal with the changed situation, to negotiate the respective advantages of old and new media[279] ("hyperlinks are genius, hyperlinks are just (laughs) so fucking amazing[280]), releasing, for example, a series of limited edition compendia of texts mostly published on the *Terrascope* website[281] – the *Terrascopaedia*[282]. Maybe today, such an approach has become commonplace; this is part of Simon Reynolds's *Retromania* dilemma (see below), and one that musicians deal with through various means. Any history of these scenes must take into account that many of its protagonists got interested in or even started playing at a time when music was still mapped in vastly different ways.

Sharon Cheslow, too, traced connections:

> what was going on in London and Greenwich Village and Haight-Ashbury in the sixties, I was really interested in, and then I started to see this parallel between that and what was happening with punk, in London, in Manchester, in New York, in San Francisco, in L.A.[283]

Fluxus, too, features in the web she discusses; Yoko Ono was a particularly important influence. For Mike Tamburo, bands like The Beatles and Sonic Youth, like *Forced Exposure* and the WRCT radio station, were important enablers of cross-referencing activities:

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[276] cf. Keenan: AP Lecture.
[277] Interview with Phil McMullen (London, May 19, 2009).
[278] Ibid. Parts of this were already quoted in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 168–169.
[279] cf. Interview with Phil McMullen (London, May 19, 2009).
[280] Ibid.
[281] *Terrascope*. http://www.terrascope.co.uk/. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.
[282] Terrascope Merchandise, in: *Terrascope*. http://terrascope.co.uk/Merchandise/Merchandise.htm. Last accessed: January 10, 2013.
[283] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (January 11, 2013).

> Sonic Youth, same sort of thing, you have this mixture of noise and hardcore and, Sonic Youth was always very vocal about what they were into, especially in interviews, and you'd see the bands [they] were touring with and things like that, I'd gotten to see the Boredoms in like 1993, and, that was totally amazing, or maybe it was 1992, at any rate, and so that opened up a whole world of Japanese noise music for me[284]

In *Gender construction*, I discussed the role of some festivals and magazines in terms of articulation[285], and this seems all the more apt here. It is not (just) about 'joining the dots' – maybe it is about capturing lines, and thus possibly effecting new lines. The act of joining the dots risks subsuming disparate strands under one great concept or narrative, but these examples show an arguably productive 'joining of the dots' that leads away from isolation and helps strengthen interesting activity, thus enabling becomings hardly encountered in the past. Does such articulation, or joining of the dots, come with political responsibility? I would argue that it certainly does, but it is a responsibility that isn't predetermined as (macro-)political.

Jeanette Leech's *Seasons They Change. The Story of Acid and Psychedelic Folk* implies a cyclical trajectory somewhat similar to that discussed by Keenan: here, the psychedelic folk aesthetic that Leech traces disappeared from the map for a while, resurfacing in contexts like that of the 'Terrastock Nation'[286]. Leech's approach is one that integrates narratives, often told via interviews (of which she conducted a remarkable amount), into one greater story in which aesthetics of acid / psychedelic folk are traced. These remain necessarily vague in their connection or definition: Leech hardly defines 'folk', an omission that on the one hand allows her to include a large breadth of stylistic variations – which, for fields like these, is crucial: any too rigid definition would fail from the very beginning. On the other hand, this approach risks basing the narrative on an aesthetic aspect that is considered pre-given, and thus writing a major history. One of the moments closest to a definition is the following:

> [Shirley Collins and Davy Graham's *Folk Roots, New Routes*] *was* a folk album, since an album largely comprised of traditional material performed acoustically could not reasonably be called by any other name, but it was also something *else*.[287]

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[284] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).
[285] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 169, 171, 200–202.
[286] cf. Terrastock Nation, The, in: *Terrascope*. http://www.terrascope.co.uk/TerrastockNation/Family_Tree.htm. Last accessed: January 22, 2012.
[287] Leech: *Seasons They Change*, 23. (Emphasis in the original text.)

It could thus be argued that the book is about a certain excess to folk, or rather a notable modification of folk, and how that is taken up in various contexts over the years. The chief quality of *Seasons They Change* is probably the wealth of information and individual but intersecting narratives collected and laid out by Leech. That very length and wealth also results in a certain neglect of political / cultural contexts and the manifold stylistic connections that could be explored beyond these excessive folk modes (thus making the book almost seem like an extreme antipode to my own project with its own potentially exclusive focus on multiplicitous social relations, rather than aesthetics). But at the same time, these narratives aren't quite collected like this anywhere else; the focus on aesthetic traits enables a certain richness. In an email, shared interviewee Phil McMullen (who helped establish the contact between us in the first place, resulting in stimulating exchange of ideas on the very contexts and work processes of our respective projects while once again illustrating these scenes' connective constitution) lauds Leech's book as "the definitive book on the subject. Her timing was immaculate and perfectly pinpointed a moment in time when free folk and psych was in vogue once again."[288]

The political and social are often implied or stated in passing: for example, one section starts with the observation that "Collins and Graham weren't alone in adopting a progressive attitude to folk music as it began to rub up against the transformative society of the 60s."[289] Much later, as one of the reasons folk music fell out of fashion in the late 1970s / early 1980s, she warns of its "potential association with Far Right, blood-and-soil nationalism"; she considers this "a tragic irony, given folk's longstanding involvement with social justice and leftwing politics"[290]. (Note how Martin Büsser distinguishes free folk from potentially reactionary / essentialist neofolk by referring to its aesthetic impurity[291]).

In this cyclical – indeed, seasonal, as the title implies[292] – narrative, the local, trans-local and virtual scenes I am writing about emerge in the second half. 'Free folk' appears as a stylistic term, a descriptive genre name, already showing up in Leech's writing on Tim Buckley[293]. One connection that Leech traces and considers crucial to

[288] Personal email correspondence with Phil McMullen (December 1, 2011).
[289] Leech: *Seasons They Change*, 24.
[290] Ibid., 187.
[291] cf. Büsser: Free Folk.
[292] cf. Leech: *Seasons They Change*, 336.
[293] cf. ibid., 131.

the revival of experimental folk in recent times is that to punk[294], thus also exposing one of my new thesis's most glaring omissions: how do the musical-social fields I am writing about relate to hardcore? There are complex personal connections through the likes of Dredd Foole, one of *Seasons They Change*'s main protagonists[295], and through numerous interviewees. A text on these drone / noise / psychedelia scenes' politics that doesn't include elaboration on hardcore's politicized practice and musics is necessarily incomplete. While this thesis's aim is not completeness, just picking out specific examples of micro- and (macro-)political strands, it is obvious that I will at least have to increase my own awareness of hardcore's history and politics when working on my next project.

Amanda Petrusich, too, visited Brattleboro[296] to explore the local scene associated with the 'New Weird America', and interviewed Byron Coley as well as Matt Valentine and Erika Elder. Notably, in Petrusich's generally more folk-oriented text, Coley is quoted as calling these musics "record collector music, in a way" and distinguishing between real folk tradition and "creations of, and re-creations of, folk tradition". This is "like a fabulous simulation"[297] or (discussing Matt Valentine's music) "a weird quilt of elements, and I recognize that that's his tongue, that's the way he speaks, that's his vision."[298] Coley's comments hint at the importance of listening experiences, of influences. Here, I want to insert three observations:

1. As Coley points out, these are re-created traditions. They aren't necessarily 'organic', linear, direct connections to any type of source. They are based on knowledge, which may be privileged knowledge in many ways and cases[299], but which has been increasingly easy to access[300]. But said access is always skewed in one way or another: according to Keenan, "bastard canons" can emerge on the basis of technology's development, through "illegitimate media", like the sonic distortions of hard-to-get 'classic' albums dubbed to "nth generation cassettes" [301] (an idea very much in line with Keenan's observations on Hypnagogic pop). At the same time, it is important to point

[294] cf. ibid., 192–201.
[295] cf. ibid., 193–194, 231–233, 237–239, 305.
[296] cf. Petrusich: *It Still Moves*, 233–253.
[297] Byron Coley, quoted in ibid., 246. For some thoughts on record collectors in these scenes and gender, see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 141–144.
[298] Byron Coley, quoted in Petrusich: *It Still Moves*, 246.
[299] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 98–116.
[300] cf. ibid., 141.
[301] Keenan: AP Lecture.

out that there are manifold connections that actually *do* exist, that artists have inspired and worked towards. In *Gender construction*, I prominently cited Erika Elder and Matt Valentine's very conscious building of histories through their curatorship of concerts in New York[302] – just one example of many in a curatorial[303] context. The question of influence and inspiration, when discussed historiographically, is reducible neither to an organic, seamless tradition nor to detached or cynical appropriation (both of which arguably are straw man positions I am constructing here anyway).

2. Mutual and shared influences and tastes are mysterious but not untraceable or ahistorical. Attempting to trace some of them in detail (how / when / where they were connected to, as well as their actual manifestations in, musicians' work) would be a crucial part of a full-length study dealing with these scenes' historicity. One particularly interesting example of how these mutual influences appeared in 2009's interviews was Samara Lubelski's story on krautrock group Neu!'s reception:

> There's always that strange thing, at a certain point [members of Metabolismus] discovered, Neu!, let's say and then at the same time I would go on a trip out west and this guy who's writing a fanzine called *Feminist Baseball*'s giving me a cassette with Neu!, you know, and it's just at the same time (MS: Yeah), like people who are really into music, they tend to come to it at the same time, in terms of the path of discovery and the things that lead to it[304]

Shortly afterwards, Lubelski explains that "if you're following a lineage of history, it almost makes sense that you'll come across things at the same time even though you're coming from different places but you're coming at it from the same sources"[305]. Chris Moon talks about a "window between sort of the death of vinyl and CDs actually coming into their own"[306] when albums by many artists of interest to Moon and like-minded listeners – including Kraftwerk and, indeed, Neu! – were hard to come across:

> part of the reason for starting a label was that there *was* nothing in print and it didn't seem like there was any money to put things in print, it seemed like we weren't gonna be at a point that some really, some obscure, I mean I'm just thinking of all the really *odd* krautrock releases that I don't even wanna listen to, that people put out now, you know (laughs), I mean now anything, "hey, if it's recorded in Germany in the early seventies, let's put it out" (MS laughs), but there was a point, where we were like, "oh, there's a lot of good music that's not in print" […][307]

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[302] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 139–140.
[303] This is also an important topic to Simon Reynolds, who dedicates an entire chapter to rock curatorship: Reynolds: *Retromania*, 129–161.
[304] Interview with Samara Lubelski (New York City, July 8, 2009).
[305] Ibid.
[306] Interview with Chris Moon (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009); cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 170–171.
[307] Interview with Chris Moon (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009).

Musicians who have been active in these scenes for more than a few years have experienced contexts that differ vastly, especially due to technological developments' impact. Glenn Donaldson "was doing stuff pre-Internet, I mean, the Internet existed, but it wasn't important in music at all, and now it's everything about music, […] we were just right in that transition to Internet music and insane genre blossoming"[308]. While Samara Lubelski is still mostly working with musicians who have been moving in similar circles for many years, collaborations with younger musicians take place too: "I find like if they're of a like mind, the age doesn't affect the music (MS: Yeah), it's just the other things around it that are different"[309]. That like-mindedness very much has to do with an understanding of (shared) history, as discussed elsewhere.[310] Eva Saelens recounts doing an East Coast tour as a member of long-running group Gang Wizard

> […] it was really awesome because Mike [Landucci] is like an elder, you know, he's been doing music and record labels and improv performances for so long that he was like my guru on that tour, he talked with me a lot about playing music and concepts and discipline and he was just, feel very lucky to have met him, even though I don't think I've really seen him much since, but at that time he was really instrumental in helping me understand what I was bringing to music and how I could refine it, he was really honest to me about that[311]

However, it seems likely that vast changes in access would also result in different coexistent, maybe even competing histories[312] and lineages being at play in these scenes (which shouldn't come as a surprise, considering their heterogeneity). Glenn Donaldson enjoys the situation and considers it

> beautiful, […] it's like imitating nature, it's just so intricate and just multifaceted, you know, music was carved up in these big chunks for so long by major labels and then by, even indie labels which got so conservative, because they were trying to compete, that they were just carving up the globe into, you know, oh Mogwai (MS laughs) and, Yo La Tengo, these were the viable genres and bands, that just capture the most number of people, and now […], there's just very specific things, […] what's your poison, I mean they have it[313]

To him, that "some housewife in the Ukraine in the 1980s can have space on the (laughs) Internet for her music" is "the ultimate punk ideal". However, he also

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[308] Interview with Glenn Donaldson (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[309] Interview with Samara Lubelski (New York City, July 8, 2009).
[310] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 127, 139–141, 205.
[311] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[312] I would like to thank Iain Campbell for his impulse here. Also see, for example, Amanda Brown's comments on how "within the underground, dance is just now finally being given the floor, the opportunity to excite people who would normally mock it for not being 'weird' or 'outsider' enough." Quoted in: Red Bull Music Academy: Interview: Amanda Brown of Not Not and 100% SILK, in: *Red Bull Music Academy*. http://www.redbullmusicacademy.com/magazine/amanda-brown-interview. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.
[313] Interview with Glenn Donaldson (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).

acknowledges that "you have all this anxiety around music" related to the greater exposure enabled by technological development.

> And before, you didn't have to deal with that, I mean, way in the underground was just like, yeah, no one wanted to buy your stupid tape (MS laughs) for five dollars, who *cares*, I mean, no one went on a vitriolic rant and said, "fuck you, you must die", just 'cause you made a tape [314]

In *Gender construction*, I discussed quotes from my interviews with Lubelski, Matt Valentine, and Ron Schneiderman that hint at the (potential) importance of "artists' awareness of history"[315] for these scenes and their relations.[316] The most recent developments in the genesis and presence of such social relations have yet to be disentangled – and might require shifts in focus so as to keep up with shifts in density: there are many social relations to be traced that could lead away from anything still recognizable or adequately conceptualized as 'free folk' (which is not necessarily detrimental to such a project – quite the opposite, as it is exactly for the complexity-aware analysis of such issues that the 'minor cultural sociology' I have proposed via Joseph can be harnessed). In the end, even the musical-social connections that are so clearly oriented towards shared histories (though not necessarily their imitation!) appear to require a spatially oriented approach first and foremost.
Also note that influence can also be traced on the level of, for example, a label's *modus operandi*: see the role the DIY activities of riot grrrl groups' "networked media economy"[317] played for some of these scenes' protagonists, and presumably for musical undergrounds in general.[318]

3. The knowledge of and access to actually vast amounts of music have been emphasized as constitutive of these scenes. As mentioned in *Gender construction*[319] in the context of a discussion of gendered (or rather, seemingly non-gendered) aesthetics, Labanna Bly talks about "how everyone really creates their own worlds" and later relates that to these musics' "genre-less"[320] appearance.
In a recent review of Marcia Bassett & Samara Lubelski's *Sunday Night, Sunday Afternoon*, Byron Coley calls Bassett and Lubelski "two of the founding members of the

[314] Ibid.
[315] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 140.
[316] cf. ibid., 127, 139–141, 205.
[317] cf. Kearney, Mary Celeste: *Girls Make Media* (New York / Abingdon 2006), 68–82.
[318] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 145–148.
[319] cf. ibid., 179.
[320] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009).

American post-form underground"[321]. Seven years earlier, Coley had reviewed the Musique Actuelle festival in Victoriaville, Canada, for *The Wire*; with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore as guest curator, it featured numerous musicians from the US undergrounds discussed here and included a collaboration between DIY noise band Wolf Eyes and free jazz musician / composer Anthony Braxton. Coley used the occasion not only to write a hilarious intro but also to present a few explanatory claims on these underground scenes. "The entire concept of the New Weirdness is based on a kind of post-hardcore, pan-generic form-gobbling." Technology has made an incredible range of musics available, and these musics benefit from it:

> Previously, the chances of a trio of twentysomethings referencing the organic electronic constellations of MEV, the length clusters of Henry Flynt, the communal psych-quack of Träd, Gräs Och Stenar, the harsh noise of Hijokaidan, the acidic folk gleam of Clive Palmer's COB, and the wham-dynamism of Japanese noise guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi inside a single evening's set would have been nil.[322]

This process seems to have been accelerating in recent years, with psychedelic / drone / 'post-Noise underground' artists increasingly engaging with pop / dance aesthetics. I have already written about David Keenan's related concept of 'Hypnagogic pop' earlier in this subchapter; a further, broader but somewhat less enthusiastic take on such phenomena appeared in Keenan's article on "The Sedition of Song"[323] (which also includes a reference to "the collapse of Noise as a genre"[324]) – and follows comments from one year earlier on how Hypnagogic pop had been turned into "a series of vapid generic signifiers"[325] by artists less eager to imply critique than the daring likes of James Ferraro (whose work would really deserve a study of its own, I feel). Meanwhile, in his much-discussed book *Retromania*[326], Simon Reynolds presents reasons for, examples of and potential ways out of popular music's tendencies to increasingly rely on patterns of the past. Pop's former progressive, inventive energies are increasingly being superseded as "in the 2000s became ever more crowded out by the past, whether in the form of archived memories of yesteryear or retro-rock leeching off ancient

[321] Coley, Byron: Marcia Bassett & Samara Lubelski. Sunday Night, Sunday Afternoon, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Sound And Music* 340 (June 2012), 46.
[322] Coley, Byron: Changing of the gardes, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 258 (August 2005), 22–25.
[323] Keenan, David: The Sedition of Song, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Sound And Music* 335 (January 2012), 40–41.
[324] Ibid., 40.
[325] Keenan, David: Wake Up Call, in: *The Wire. Adventures in Modern Music* 323 (January 2011), 43.
[326] Reynolds, Simon: *Retromania. Pop Culture's Addition to Its Own Past* (New York 2011).

styles."[327] Reynolds is very honest about his position[328] writing as a modernist interested in inventive, forward-looking musics and attempts to tackle questions of pop's past, present and (endangered?) future; free folk is one of his book's examples for how music scenes work with / on the past. To Reynolds, free folk is a genre, though at the same time, he tends to conflate it with what has been called 'freak folk'. In *Retromania*'s "Prologue"[329], Reynolds rightfully points out a strange phenomenon: that "the freak-folk artists"[330] ("performers like Joanna Newsom, Devendra Banhart, MV & EE, Wooden Wand, Espers"[331]) aren't interested in contemporary folk musicians like Eliza Carthy who, rather than preserving certain folk tropes from the late 1960s and early 1970s, attempt to keep folk music up to date. While this is certainly a valid observation leading to valid questions (which arguably touch upon the topic of pluralistic expansion, see chapter 5.2), it is also problematic. There certainly are retro[332] modes present in these scenes, but not only are they identified and questioned if going too far, at least by some practitioners[333] (though maybe that wouldn't qualify as 'retro' any more according to Reynolds's definition anyway): I think they tend not to be *quite* as central as Reynolds paints them, at least in this section of *Retromania*. Reynolds suggests there is an "American free-folk movement (sometimes known as freak folk or wyrd folk)"[334]; later in the book[335], he adds a temporal level ("pioneered by the likes of Charalambides and MV & EE, and popularised by Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom") that contributes additional complexity. Some arguments certainly bear great validity and interest, including his assertion that the harkening back to what Greil Marcus, referring to Harry Smith's *Anthology of Folk Music*, called 'the old weird America' has to do with a distrust of a corporate "rootless culture of consumerism and entertainment"[336]. But the prologue's argument on the phenomenon that free folk artists seem uninterested in contemporary folk musics rests to a certain extent on a portrayal of these musics as folk in a first and foremost aesthetic / stylistic / generic sense, on the lack of contextualization within a complex contemporary underground field, and on the

[327] Ibid., x.
[328] Ibid., 403–404.
[329] Ibid., xxv–xxxvi.
[330] Ibid., xxxiv.
[331] Ibid., xxxiii–xxxiv.
[332] cf. ibid., xxx–xxxi.
[333] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 167.
[334] Reynolds: *Retromania*, xxxiii.
[335] cf. ibid., 343–345.
[336] Ibid., 344.

conflation of numerous 'folk'-related genre terms[337]. Reynolds is certainly aware of these scenes' complexity, an awareness proven especially by his mention of free folk's consisting of a multitude of sources (referencing Amanda Petrusich's conversation with Byron Coley), and by his characterization of David Keenan as "a long-time tracker of currents within the noise/drone/free-folk underground."[338] But his focus on folk aesthetics assumed as central makes him list artists who might sound more 'folk'-like but who often have less to do with each other than, say, some of these folkier groups have with the free jazz duo of Chris Corsano and Paul Flaherty. Keenan himself notes (once again in his Audio Poverty talk) that free folk has "nothing to do with folk music"[339] Discussing the festival with Matt Valentine on the Brattleboro Common, Ron Schneiderman remarks that "at the actual Free Folk Festival, there was not so much folk really" – "maybe like 30 percent […] of the sets were kinda folk-based". Trying to find ways of describing the rest, Schneiderman remarks that "I don't even say free music any more, […] I'm just trying to (Valentine: Yeah) present a demonstration of freedom of some sort."[340]

Reynolds's take is obviously well-informed and based on remarkable knowledge of contemporary music but, in this case, risks creating dubious molarities[341] (though I am well aware that my own project, especially in this second thesis with its – at times – second-order tracings often fails to do justice to these scenes' molecularities). Take this quote by Christina Carter of Charalambides in an interview with *Pitchfork*'s The Out Door column:

> I was glancing through that *Retromania* book, and Simon Reynolds calls us pioneers of freak folk. Pioneers of freak folk? I felt like calling him up and saying, "If you're going to do that, why don't you call me first and ask me, how does it feel being a pioneer of freak folk? And I can tell you it's completely wrong." The whole concept that we're trying to recreate a 1960s sound is completely false. Or the whole idea that we're positing ourselves as rural musicians-- we've always been an urban band. We've lived in Houston, Austin, San Francisco, New York. I don't even know how to plant a garden![342]

This doesn't take away from the overall relevance of *Retromania*; these are mild objections to relatively specific bits of a generally extremely knowledgeable book that

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[337] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 46; Petrusich: *It Still Moves*, 239.
[338] Reynolds: *Retromania*, 345.
[339] Keenan: AP Lecture.
[340] Ron Schneiderman, in: interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[341] cf. for example Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 229–255.
[342] Christina Carter, quoted in Masters, Marc: III. Voice Within: A Brief History of Charalambides, in: The Out Door: History in the Remaking. *Pitchfork*. http://pitchfork.com/features/the-out-door/8670-history-in-the-remaking/3/. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.

poses important questions. Reynolds goes on to make interesting comments on Hypnagogic pop[343], notably its relation to media / technology. I think *Retromania* is at its best, or makes its points most strongly, when Reynolds explicates his theses' economic aspects and connections[344], for it is here that *Retromania* shows most potently that in these times of musical "hyper-stasis"[345], there is more at stake than 'only' aesthetic questions.

Thus far, this subchapter was oriented more towards the abstract, towards gaps (even though they might not always have been affirmed), towards the examination of constructed lineages. Another important aspect, however, would be the presence of musicians who can very easily be considered parts of these scenes and who had been active for quite some time before the articulation of 'free folk' / the 'New Weird America', for example (more on that later). I have discussed the importance of Sonic Youth for these scenes and some protagonists' understanding of gender in music[346]. I have also quoted author Byron Coley multiple times already in this subchapter, an experienced writer in these fields, and co-founder of *Forced Exposure*, who has also been writing reviews for *Arthur Magazine* with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore.[347] That very connection also helped Tara Burke put out one of her first releases as Fursaxa:

> Michael [Gibbons of Bardo Pond] was like, "why don't you send it to Byron Coley", […] Byron got back to me and was like, "yeah, I really like this", and he said "I think it'd be right up Thurston Moore's alley", I think were his, were the exact words (both laugh), and, so I think he gave me Thurston's address or something to send it to, and then I, so I sent it to Thurston, and then, yeah, I remember getting a letter from him, […] saying, basically, "yeah, I'd like to put your record out", so yeah (both laugh), it was pretty exciting[348]

Forced Exposure's influence is hard to overestimate. Numerous interviewees mentioned the magazine while detailing their music tastes' development. *Forced Exposure* was present in Eric Arn's early years as a musician, not least through the label's release of a Crystalized Movements album and by helping the band get concert opportunities. Their

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[343] cf. Reynolds: *Retromania*, 345–354.
[344] cf. for example ibid., 403–404, 419–423..
[345] Ibid., 427.
[346] cf. Spiegel: Gender construction, 144–146.
[347] cf. Gross, Jason: Byron Coley. Interview by Jason Gross, Part 1 (June 2010), in: *Perfect Sound Forever*. http://www.furious.com/perfect/byroncoley.html. Last accessed: January 25, 2013.
[348] Interview with Tara Burke (Orwigsburg, July 17, 2009). Here, a slight '*mea culpa*' is in order: due to various circumstances, bad luck and stress, I was quite late in sending a new version of the quote, mildly re-edited as in most other interviewees' cases, to Tara Burke, explicitly asking for confirmation but not receiving one in time due to my very late-ness. Hence, the already confirmed, less streamlined version is included here.

last show saw them support Borbetomagus and Sonic Youth (previewing *Daydream Nation* as The Steve Shelley Experience) in Boston.[349] Not only is the Sonic Youth connection at hand, once again, but free jazz / noise band Borbetomagus were an important inspiration for Arn. It is particularly interesting to find an issue of *Forced Exposure* that not only features Sonic Youth on the cover but also includes a 1967 Velvet Underground interview[350] as transcribed by Dan 'Dredd Foole' Ireton. Various of this subchapter's threads seem to coalesce in this particular example. Particularly interesting at this point is the part played by Dan Ireton, whom Chris Corsano introduced as "*the* history of free folk in Brattleboro"[351] at the Free Folk Festival, and whose *In Quest Of Tense* Keenan suggests is "where the initial energising spark for the New Weird America came from"[352] according to musicians participating in the Free Folk Festival. Spencer Clark doesn't feel particularly related to the New England scenes so central to *The Wire*'s cover story on the New Weird America but affirms that "I still think Dredd Foole's like the coolest dude to listen to (MS laughs), really, he's like my favorite dude"[353].

There also are further artists and labels still active in these scenes that formed what seemed like somewhat looser, primarily trans-local scenes in the early and mid-1990s. Having taken over an "an avant-garde radio program on a community radio station" in Lincoln, Nebraska, Chris Moon and a friend played

> the prog, the krautrock stuff, musique concrète, industrial, whatever else we could get our hands on, and at that time all this nineties, sort of mid-nineties stuff like Bardo Pond, Charalambides, Fushitsusha […] was coming out, so we were playing that and getting really into it[354]

For Moon, Ed Hardy's mailorder Eclipse Records was one of the main sources for these musics. Finding out about and reading zines and, especially, "meeting some of the right people" led to discoveries of contemporary underground musics – Moon also cites the Drunken Fish, Kranky and PSF labels as important examples of new music he accessed actively[355] after having "gone from like krautrock stuff and prog stuff to industrial stuff". His own surroundings in Nebraska still felt somewhat distant from those other mid-1990s activities:

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[349] Interview with Eric Arn (Vienna, June 21, 2009).
[350] Velvet Underground and Nico, The, transcribed by Dan Ireton. Intro by Byron Coley, in: *Forced Exposure* 7 / 8 (summer 1985), 26–27, 57.
[351] Chris Corsano, quoted in Keenan: The Fire Down Below, 34.
[352] Keenan: The Fire Down Below, 40.
[353] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009).
[354] Interview with Chris Moon (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009).
[355] For the potential importance of the aspect, see, for example, Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 113–114.

> It just felt very disconnected, from what's going on in all these other scenes, I'm not gonna say there's a Nebraska scene, 'cause I'm not really sure there is, at least in the time there were a few freaks making some noise and, I mean I count myself among [them], I use it as in an endearing kind of way (MS laughs), but, I don't feel like there was any connection to what was actually going on at the time, because this *was* concurrent with all those nineties bands we were talking about, like all the stuff on Drunken Fish and Kranky and all that[356]

As Moon's reference to Japanese music shows, similar positions could be held by internationally active artists, not least ones from New Zealand (like The Dead C, Roy Montgomery, Alastair Galbraith…) – I will return to some particularly important connection to music from that country in chapter 4.2. Ed Hardy of Eclipse Records gave Chris Moon a mix tape of underground music from New Zealand – an important moment for Moon, as his label Last Visible Dog would go on to work with many New Zealand musicians.[357] Mike Tamburo recounts a Dead C show witnessed while still in his teens: "I think maybe 30 people or 40 people came to see The Dead C, but amazingly, they have this canon behind them, that they're just this amazing, I mean they *are* amazing, but not many people know who they are"[358]. These New Zealand scenes are, alongside Japan, one of the two accumulations of musicians from "more geographically isolated spots"[359] David Keenan talks about in his Audio Poverty talk. These artists' modernist takes on rock traditions and the already discussed opening of canons inspired the US underground music activities of the late 1990s and 2000s.[360]

It is also this phase, around the turn of the century, of which Jeanette Leech, in *Seasons They Change*, suggests that "before the many, there were the few."[361] Here, a number of groups (In Gowan Ring, Stone Breath, The Iditarod) is presented as basically predating the expansion of interest in psychedelic / experimental folk.[362] According to Leech, these groups "have […] been largely written out of the 'freak folk' story"[363]. Leech reinscribes them, dedicating a chapter to their work, staging a return[364] (more on that concept below). Many aspects here are of particular interest – the example of these groups shows the varying perceptions of aesthetics / style in time that could be

[356] Interview with Chris Moon (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009). Other labels whose role could be mentioned here are, among others, Majora, Siltbreeze and VHF (cf. Dale, Jon: Dredd Foole. Daze On The Mounts, in: The *Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 275 (January 2007), 52.)
[357] cf. interview with Chris Moon (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009).
[358] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).
[359] Keenan: AP Lecture.
[360] cf. ibid.
[361] Leech: *Seasons They Change*, 219.
[362] cf. ibid., 219–229.
[363] Ibid., 228
[364] cf. Joseph: Beyond the Dream Syndicate, 40–44.

theorized via Meaghan Morris's ideas. On a spatial level, the relevance of The Iditarod has already been established somewhat over the course of this project: Jeffrey Alexander, founder of the band alongside Carin Wagner (now Sloan), and Miriam Goldberg, a member of the group's last incarnation and then one half of Black Forest / Black Sea, her project with Alexander, are interviewees; their Secret Eye label has been discussed in *Gender construction*, especially because of the label roster's diversity and its implications.[365] Alexander curated the Terrastock 6 festival (and played at other Terrastocks[366]), an important node, not least for my thesis. All of this could be deepened through the application of sophisticated concepts of time, of change.

My interview with Britt Brown of Not Not Fun Records was particularly interesting in terms of its spatio-temporal mappings: Brown talked about the various 'circles' accessed over time – indeed, locatable in a framework discussing local, trans-local and virtual scenes. In addition, the phrase 'community building' appears – Brown knows that communities aren't necessarily pre-given, and he is aware of differences related to the specific time / phase of one's access to scenes[367] ("we all come across it whenever we do, who can say when, depending on our age and our background and culture and where we live and friends and, various factors"[368]), as well as of shifting levels of activity and interest. Indeed, some labels or artists, while still active, might be seen as having been particularly innovative, or representative, or exciting at any given point; as an arbitrary example, I want to mention Load Records in Providence, described by Marc Masters as one of the 2000s' crucial noise labels in his review of the decade[369], and appearing in numerous interviewees' stories – sometimes implicitly, when Providence noise rock duo Lightning Bolt were mentioned. Britt Brown relates:

> I think it shifts over time which sorts of media outlets or which record labels are carrying the most prestige. You know, at different times different things have mattered more. I felt like the phase when we were finding out about underground music it was like, if a band had a release on Load Records or something, that was a very huge a deal and so if a band came through LA on that label, it was immediately built in, it didn't matter what the reviews were – to have that vote of confidence immediately meant a certain level of attention would be paid to you.[370]

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[365] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 166–167, 201–202.
[366] Terrastock Nation, The, in: *Terrascope*. http://www.terrascope.co.uk/TerrastockNation/Family_Tree.htm. Last accessed: January 22, 2012.
[367] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 165.
[368] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009).
[369] cf. Masters, Marc: The Decade in Noise, in: *Pitchfork*. Features (September 14, 2009). http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/7702-the-decade-in-noise/1/. Last accessed: November 23, 2012., Also see Büsser: Befreite Klänge, 31–33.
[370] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (January 11, 2013).

Eva Saelens narrates that

> in the first summer I was into music, Portland experienced a kind of renaissance, I feel like *music* maybe experienced a renaissance at that time, it was like, Lightning Bolt was touring and, I remember the summer of those tours, I saw them play in a place that, I felt like we almost busted the walls open with the number of people in there, I guess the room that they played in was w-, the walls were wet for two days from the human condensation and the sweat (MS laughs) in there, everyone was coming together just so excitedly on many new notions of music and I just happened to come at the right time, and I just absorbed it quickly, I really, really loved it[371]

Sharon Cheslow, in the context of answering my questions for this new thesis, "remember[s] how exciting it was to see Lightning Bolt play on the floor instead of the stage... It may not have been an explicitly political act, but it followed in the tradition of breaking down the performer/audience hierarchy."[372] It appears that Load Records and / or Lightning Bolt, not least due to their extremely energetic stage show, stood for a certain inventive energy going beyond established conventions of performance. A minor history following Load Records (or the band) could attempt to trace discourses surrounding the label and its reception, investigate to what extent the label's aesthetics were genuinely connected to by other musicians and to what extent the spreading (or non-spreading) of such aesthetic traits relates to the labels, or its artists', historically perceived importance.

All these examples offer hints on the development if what I call 'free folk' here, a wild conglomerate of free jazz, drone, rock, noise, psychedelic, electronic, acoustic and other musics that can't be reduced to that of a single genre. Also, it seems utterly impossible to define a starting point for so vague and fluid a phenomenon as the perceived rise of 'free folk', or whatever name (if any) is chosen for these psychedelic underground musics, in the 2000s. With Joseph (and Conrad and Foucault), I could, however, ask for emergence. Emergence is, of course, indeterminate and arises from conflicts of forces. A major theme of *Gender construction* was the role of festivals, labels et cetera for the articulation of these scenes. The Terrastock festivals were mentioned as were the Pasture and Brattleboro Free Folk[373] festivals. Coverage of the Free Folk Festival in particular would have to be analyzed for its role in initiating[374] a 'free folk' or 'New Weird America' discourse. There might be a discourse related to these and similar terms

[371] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[372] Personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (December 20, 2012).
[373] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 159–163.
[374] For further theoretical background, see Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 40–44.

that colors modes of discussing these disparate musics. Via Foucault, Joseph explains that

> [a discourse] maps out a field of possible activities and statements that is both specific and differential. It describes and delimits a type of unity or territory in which statements or practices develop in ways that include the possibility of being contradictory or even opposed to one another.[375]

The festival now has "semi-legendary"[376] or even "legendary"[377] status. Of course, to what extent this amounted to or influenced actual scene building is a question that would have to be discussed in a larger study with the festival in its middle (not necessarily at its center). Talking about the Free Folk Festival and its time, Valentine states that "it was the high wave, we were all riding the crest of that wave for a while from that, I mean, it was a beautiful time in music"[378]. Asked again about Keenan's article after it had already come up the day before during the part of Matt Valentine's interview he had joined us for[379], Ron Schneiderman says it "opened up a lot of stuff and I feel like nothing's really kind of matched that or anything we've been doing in terms of exposure"[380]. It is especially the opportunity to travel that Schneiderman emphasizes in these interviews.

A great impact on at least some of the festival's participants can definitely be observed. It is via Joseph's Foucauldian discussions, too, that such an impact could be theorized – but it is also through the application of such concepts that alternative histories of the US sub-underground could be written, using, for example, other festivals as focal points – or even dispatching of festivals or articles as points of initiations of such discourses. It all very much depends on who is active on which level, whose and which trajectories are traced. Such a return "seeks […] to rebegin the discourse, to initiate it anew such that its structure develops differently, encompasses and entails other (equally concrete and consequential) aspects of its historical development."[381]

My thesis project encompasses numerous interconnected generations of musicians. While awareness of said interconnection should preclude any easy distinction into

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[375] Ibid., 42.
[376] Barnes: Jeanette Leech. Seasons They Change, 75.
[377] Dale, Jon: Dredd Foole, 52; Spicer, Daniel: Jailbreak. The Rocker / Heather Leigh. Jailhouse Rock, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 314 (April 2010), 58.
[378] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[379] cf. ibid.
[380] Interview with Ron Schneiderman (Brattleboro, July 13, 2009).
[381] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 43.

supposedly individual generations, the relevance of age should not be ignored (although, as the earlier quote from *Gender construction* suggests, I certainly could have placed greater emphasis on it in my interviews and writing). In addition to the potential discrepancies and lack of contact between, for example, labels who started at different times (as already discussed in *Gender construction*)[382], there are numerous other manifestations of age difference. I have already quoted Samara Lubelski on her work with younger musicians above, and Eva Saelens on an older musician's role as a mentor; a more pessimistic example is found in a Facebook post[383] by Windy Weber that, among other things, hints at forms of ageism (intersecting with sexism) that added to her decision to cease playing live in a music world that appears obsessed with youth and, despite the existence of important connections between friends, often fails to care adequately for those touring it. This definitely is a topic that would have to be worked on through the conduct of (further) interviews.

In the context of our discussion of the roles women played and / or were assigned in these musics over the years, Christina Carter narrates that Charalambides, lacking drums and other bands' volume as well as not "present[ing] an athleticism", faced difficulties when playing shows. Citing more classic, predictable rock band setups on the one hand and then multiplicitous alternative setups (unconventional not least in gender terms) on the other, she says that "those variables have become way more fluid, it seems, and… I think it's finally got to the point where people have finally in general said, 'oh, you can just do whatever you want, really'". (One of the relevant factors here is that some people have "more like an art perspective on it, looking back to precedences like gallery shows, loft shows, art shows, that happened during the sixties and seventies"[384].) However, to Carter, this greater fluidity hasn't led to profound liberation – see chapter 5.2. Generally, aesthetic contexts have changed for artists – and artists themselves have changed, though to different degrees. In a context that usually sees musicians play in numerous bands, different speeds are encountered on (notionally) individual trajectories. Talking about Scorces, Christina Carter says that

[382] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 165.
[383] Windy & Carl: the last waltz, in: Windy & Carl. *Facebook* (October 15, 2012). Last accessed: January 26, 2013.
[384] Interview with Christina Carter (Austin, July 28, 2009). See Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 119, for a more explicitly gender-oriented reading of that fluidity, the opportunities it offers and the dangers it poses.

> we haven't really played all that much together because of moving and being far apart. There's not really that, I mean there's the phase where we played chord organs at the beginning, and then chord organ and guitar, and then after Heather got her pedal steel, we basically, centred on guitar and pedal steel, so, there's not really all that much development, and we pretty much stuck with the same, sound, I guess, Charalambides was way more changing, and way more, had been way more active[385]

Useful theorization for such circumstances might be best found at an imagined intersection of Branden W. Joseph's and Meaghan Morris's respective approaches, making a minor history focus on different tempi.

As numerous themes that have occurred in this subchapter should have shown, a history of these scenes according to the impact of technology could be extremely interesting.

> What is fundamental to the course of music in the 20th century may be better read as a series of disparate technological and theoretical transformations from which emerged a previously inconceivable pluralism. Not reducible to the relativism of commercial variety, this pluralism would rather be one that takes advantage of serious engagements with the material real of music and sound, within which is staged a thorough investigation of the forms of musical systems that can emerge from these engagements.[386]

The trajectories of interviewees like Eric Arn who have been performing such musics (in all their diversity) since the mid-1980s are excellent examples of such technological developments and their impact, with various media, types of resources or even places – college radio, telephone, letters, zines, newspapers, flyers, record stores, mailorder catalogs, email, websites – taking on various roles, serving a variety of purposes, functioning as nodes for band and scene construction according to temporal *and* spatial contexts.[387] In fact, the mailing lists that so many interviewees mention (and participated in) could be – as far as they or their archives are still available – utterly remarkable sources for materials usable in such a history of genre-defying / -mixing undergrounds. Ideally, they could help shed light on rediscoveries and reappropriations: that rare type of artifact that possibly allows pinpointing specific protagonists' moments of encounters with future influences through the recommendation of others. This cannot tell the whole story of such influences (a concept whose dangers I have already invoked earlier) but could serve as a welcome addition to or background for more abstract, less

[385] Interview with Christina Carter (Austin, July 28, 2009).
[386] Campbell, Iain: Some thoughts on Deleuze, Cage, and the relation between philosophy and music, in: *Groundwork. A Blog for Everyone and No One*. http://groundworkphilosophy.wordpress.com/2012/11/02/some-thoughts-on-deleuze-cage-and-the-relation-between-philosophy-and-music/. Last accessed: January 26, 2013.
[387] cf. interview with Eric Arn (Vienna, June 21, 2009). See, for example, my discussion of college radio in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 109–111; numerous other related examples can be found throughout the text.

clearly defined tracings of affect and taste. With their (probable) abundance of material, they might even serve as the primary source for a genealogy of specific phases and parts of the late 1990s / early 2000s experimental music underground.

One last remark: band histories and artists' own life stories themselves are far from linear, have unpredictable dynamics of their own. Again, I am stating the obvious, especially against the backdrop of my own discussions of band structures and life narratives in these scenes. But it is, for example, worth quoting interviewee Christina Carter's conceptualization of her own musical trajectory:

> I don't really see a development so much, I see like a… there's a giant something, and, that sort of exists, and, at various time periods you focus in on […] some combination of traits, you focus in on that, you might do that for a while or you might not and then you switch to another sort of and you, then your focus goes in and goes out, small to more specific to larger more general ideas, […] and you circle around this thing that basically is you, inside of yourself, and it's not really… you're not really going from point A to point B to point C to point D, it's more like you're, circling around something that already exists, and sort of relating to friends or portraying different ways to relate to it[388]

Later on, she adds a comment about how "there's […] a period of expansion and contraction, I think, more than development"[389], the former characterized by greater enthusiasm for various activities (touring, collaborating…). Maybe ideas of expansion and contraction as well as the changes in density / changes of densities could be particularly relevant to an interesting historiography of these underground musics: trace the gain or loss of density, make obvious parallel gains and losses, expansions and contractions and how they relate. These can be stylistic as well as social, and while this is tempting, they don't need to be conceptualized in binary terms of mutual determination (the interest in pop forms results in the supersession of more abstract forms; the rise of the solo project destroys bands… the latter topic will reappear in chapter 3.3). The field of research's conceptualization is very much about the locating of densities, which may result in the (tentative / non-permanent / context-dependent) analytic exclusion of artists not particularly closely related to my interviewees, perhaps outside of the general radius established through reading up on and then further establishing the scenes through my choice of interviewees.[390] Rather than by set borders, the field of research can thus be defined by tracing the ever-shifting densities of (rhizomatic) connections. This very tracing then implies exclusions – I am unable to

[388] Interview with Christina Carter (Austin, July 28, 2009).
[389] Ibid.
[390] See, for example, Spiegel: Gender construction, 105, footnote 276.

mention everyone in my theses – but doesn't instate them as the primary, defining moment. These scenes have their own means of inclusion and exclusion, but a tracing conducted through explicit positioning of musicians and groups as essentially outside the field of research would fail to do the scenes' openness and dynamic character justice.[391]

3.3 The Power Recordings

Facing Joseph's text from my specific perspective, I have to pay attention to the levels on which the investigation takes place: I cannot quite aspire to analyses of individual works of art like Joseph does here; not least through the help of further literature, I have to draw specific lines from Joseph's arguments by discussing specific examples and avoiding all-encompassing generalization.[392] One interesting way of connecting ideas on the musical-social fields discussed here in relation to the context Conrad and Young worked in might be to compare these scenes, or certain strands thereof, to the implications of Cage's work as singled out by Joseph. The "aesthetic of immanence" Cage posited – through a "thoroughgoing disarticulation of any and all abstract or transcendent connections between sounds or between the individual components of a sound"[393] – is the first of these. However, problems are faced here immediately. First of all, it would be impossible to accord to 'free folk' as a whole, whatever that may be, a distinct position *vis à vis* this particular implication of Cage's work. Different positions would be found here, with musicians whose work might be seen as clearly a result of a post-Cage world arguing for transcendent goals in music probably being just as present as declarations of immanence that nonetheless aren't explicitly Cagean. Secondly, what at this point is of possibly greater interest to this project is a certain difference between musicians' approaches to their instruments on the one hand and rhetoric on the other. Rather than sounds, I can write about (the perception of) tools.[394] I believe that all in all, this is one of various not-quite-dead ends that show that when taking the project's next steps, I will have to branch out into musicological thought to a certain extent.

I want to point out one example here of an approach to musical practice that is neither reducible to immanent aesthetics nor to an escapist transcendence but might be seen as

[391] This discussion of densities and networks is also inspired by my discussion of the field of research with Phil McMullen, for whose impulses I am grateful.
[392] Also see, for example, Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 57–58.
[393] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 77.
[394] Most notably, see my first thesis's chapter on "Instruments" (Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 116–129.)

heading in either direction. In *Gender construction*, I discussed[395] Spencer Clark's assertion that The Skaters "kinda tried to just use things that weren't instruments, you know (MS: Yeah), and so we weren't like dictating a sound by using the instruments" and that "there's no thought process behind that except for being really hesitant to identify with anything other than this vision or something like that". He is interested in music that is "really expressive" and says that

> I'm really interested (MS: Yeah) in recording and building a world that exists outside of like, the music, it's not music, it's like brain juice, you know what I mean (MS: Yeah), it's like imagination, it's not, it should be more than that even, it should be more radical[396]

Shortly afterwards, he adds: "I would hope that I was coming from a really honest, imaginative universe rather than a place where I feel like I should insert myself within a format or something like that"[397]. Clark's material aesthetics don't keep him from making music the carrier of imagination, of ideas external to the actual sounds.

In terms of the Cagean embrace of nature ("understood as an ongoing process of ateleological and nonhierarchical transformation"[398]), it would seem like a good idea to at some point investigate the Jewelled Antler Collective's approach in greater depth, inspired, for example, by Justin Kaw's contrasting of its work to "the Cageian-Fluxus-Minimalist nexus": to him, Jewelled Antler "de-center the individual composer" as part of a greater, holistic embrace of a multitude of sound sources, not in order to reject "traditional practice"[399] (although, as mentioned later in this thesis, Glenn Donaldson is well-aware of his work's political implications).

The second implication of Cage's work, according to Joseph, concerns the derigidified relationship between the audience and the (indeterminate) artwork, also questioning the latter's status. It is pretty much impossible for me to actually study and discuss the audience, or (less so) audience relations at this moment – my project has thus far mostly remained focused on and attached to the musicians themselves (although they constitute a notable part of each others' respective audiences). However, this point in Joseph's book provides one first opportunity to engage in greater depth with the *Horde*. In

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[395] cf. ibid., 122–123.

[396] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009). This quote, too, was discussed in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 172–173. Here, I am recontextualizing these quotes and hopefully deepening my understanding therof.

[397] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009).

[398] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 78.

[399] Kaw, Justin: Return of the Jewelled Antler, in: *Aughts for Nought. Notes on an Unnamed Decade Just Like Any Other (Or at Least/ Worst Like the Previous Two). Sweet Pea's Ghost Dance*. http://www.sweetpeareview.com/sweets14.html#fourth. Last accessed: January 29, 2013.

Gender construction, I referenced Diedrich Diederichsen's take on bands like Acid Mothers Temple, Jackie-O Motherfucker, No-Neck Blues Band, Sunburned Hand Of The Man and Vibracathedral Orchestra[400]: Diederichsen contextualizes them as successors to earlier *Horden* – hippie collectives like The Grateful Dead, Amon Düül, Amon Düül II and Gong on the one hand, the more monastic examples of the Sun Ra Arkestra and the Artistic Heritage Ensemble on the other. The new (or, post-, as I interpreted that specific Diederichsen text) *Horden* don't necessarily live as hordes, unlike some of those earlier collectives, but reference their predecessors' aesthetics. In these groups' musics, Diedrichsen detects an improvisatory, unhurried openness and generosity – an ethos that opposes fixed genre conventions and predictable forms. I feel it is worth taking a further look at Diederichsen's ideas especially over the course of this chapter, not least because there are further writings by Diederichsen[401], undiscussed in *Gender construction*, that allow for greater elaboration. So when Joseph contextualizes what Cage calls the "carelessness with regard to the outcome"[402], considering it "an explicit challenge not only to abstraction, but to dialectics"[403], I am reminded of that very openness and generosity Diederichsen finds in these horde-like bands' musics. Writing about No-Neck Blues Band's live performances, he encounters "*eine hohe Beiläufigkeit*" (a high [degree of] casualness) and "*eine Ethik der Entspannung*" (an ethics of relaxation). Later on, he argues that the refusal to let others prescribe the very forms of freedom equals "*[d]ie wahre Abschaffung des Stresses*"[404] (the true abolition of stress). And yet, this might be a dubious connection. These groups do not necessarily / always go as far in their relation to the audience as to create a truly "differentiated, but non-hierarchical field of sonic occurrences"[405] in which the listener situates her- / himself. At the same time, performances by bands like NNCK and Sunburned are very far from any form of didacticism as may be encountered in Cage[406], while key aspects

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[400] cf. Diederichsen, Diedrich: Die Horde, in: *Musikzimmer. Avantgarde und Alltag* (Köln 2005), 156–159; Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 140–141.
[401] Diederichsen, Diedrich: Die Horde als sozialmusikalische Aufgabe, in: *Die Musikforschung* 57 (2004), 249–256; Diederichsen, Diedrich: Rückkehr des Kollektivs. Ein Hintergrundessay zu „collective identities", in: Berno Odo Polzer / Thomas Schäfer (eds.): *Katalog Wien Modern 2005* (Saarbrücken 2005), 66–69. Available at http://www.wienmodern.at/Portals/0/Galerie/collective_identities/Katalog%202005_Diedrich%20Diederichsen,%20R%C3%BCckkehr%20des%20Kollektivs%20%28c%29%20Wien%20Modern.pdf. Last accessed: January 21, 2013.
[402] John Cage, quoted in Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 80. Joseph cites this as being taken from Cage, John: Composition as Process I: Changes (1958), in: *Silence* (Middletown, 1961), 31.
[403] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 79.
[404] Diederichsen: Rückkehr des Kollektivs.
[405] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 79.
[406] cf. Hegarty, Paul: *Noise/Music. A History* (New York / London 2007), 92, 172.

of the 'natural turn' and the 'social turn' seem very much internalized. These (not just "potentially collective"[407] but actually collective) groups' profound weirdness and noise doesn't constitute an imposition.

In these scenes, experimentation, the third Cagean implication, may not manifest in the radical mode of, for example, Throbbing Gristle[408] but could be seen as being articulated particularly fruitfully in, again, some of these scenes' more radical improvisatory ensembles in which the liberatory "death of the composer"[409] (maybe a continuous, recurring death) is pre-given.[410]

That the fourth implication, a "subversion of power" through the "dissolution or dismantling of transcendent structures" is, in Cage's case, an "anarchist position"[411] matches these improvising groups' work, too. With Michel Foucault and via John Zorn, Paul Hegarty argues that "de facto power exists" and "is a creative force"; thus, "improvisation is not anarchic, but anarchistic."[412] Diedrich Diederichsen points out that the No-Neck Blues Band's music never falls into the trap of becoming expressive.[413] In *Gender construction*, I argued that groups like Sunburned Hand Of The Man, in their "sprawling connectability[414]", could be seen as alternatives to more rigid forms within and outside of music.

Fifth and last – do these musics pose a "challenge" to music's, or other art forms', "disciplinary status"[415]? Maybe here, once again, we encounter a post-Cagean world (what a misleading term – to trace all relevant developments back to Cage would neither do the topic nor Cage himself justice) in which music is, in many ways, a discipline of its own but has itself become so muddled that many combinations of media are perfectly plausible options to choose for many of these artists. Numerous examples of multimedia collaborations could be noted here; and on the individual level, examples like Spencer Clark may be encountered. "For Clark, the *sound* of his projects is just one

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[407] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 101.
[408] Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, 105. I will go on to discuss Throbbing Gristle's work later in this chapter.
[409] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 80.
[410] But, as Hegarty says, "[t]the composer figure will never go away, though, and the composer is set tasks by Cage: […]" (Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, 91).
[411] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 81.
[412] Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, 56, footnote 27.
[413] cf. Diederichsen, Diedrich: Verfolge den Prozess! In: *taz.de* (June 14, 2004). http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/?id=archivseite&dig=2004/06/14/a0218. Last accessed: November 29, 2012.
[414] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 186.
[415] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 81.

element of a Gesamtkunstwerk involving music, visuals and text."[416] There is at the very least exchange between supposedly different modes of artistic creativity.
Still, sound probably remains central and constitutive. To proclaim the realization of any Cagean theater[417] would be wide off the mark here, although certain artists may be aspiring to such a dissolution of distinctions. However, the fluidity of discipline / genre borders is accepted and adapted to such an extent that a certain Cagean success can be noted. Joseph writes about the world in which Tony Conrad and La Monte Young found themselves: "Not eradicating, but continually questioning the notion of medium or disciplinary specificity was, in other words, a primary condition of being 'advanced' after Cage."[418] Maybe a post-Cagean stance that was then struggled for and around is now easier to attain, and certain aspects thereof are basic parts of 21st century artists' aesthetic vocabularies and worldviews. This is probably a much sounder take on these questions than the direct application of Cage I (almost) went for.

That I have kept returning to the (post-)*Horden* that Diederichsen is particularly fond of certainly has a variety of reasons. Most obviously, Diederichsen's own, inherently and implicitly political reasons for advocating these groups are very convincing. Also, in the context of my particular project, some of these groups' 'messy' (a term often used by Hegarty in *Noise/Music: A History*[419]) aspects can be discussed and applied to these Cagean ideas on the level of the social (and the musical-social) rather than on a musicological level which, again, this project is not yet ready for. But maybe most importantly, further elaborations on Joseph's part are quite easily connectable to unusual group phenomena like Jackie-O Motherfucker, No-Neck Blues Band or Sunburned Hand Of The Man while providing a useful base for further commentary on these groups, their structures and histories themselves. Joseph suggests that

> we could say that, by 1960, at the latest, Cage conceived form as a particular *technique* of power, a moment within a micropolitics. To disarticulate, unstitch, or undermine form, to produce an aesthetic of immanence, was therefore to dismantle that technique."[420]

For many of the artists I have interviewed, music and the rest of their life aren't divided. Music and life aren't necessarily considered in the same terms, and music is not all-

[416] Spicer, Daniel: Sliding Scales, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Sound And Music* 335 (January 2012), 28. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[417] cf. Joseph: Beyond the Dream Syndicate, 81–84.
[418] Ibid., 84.
[419] For example in his discussion of Japanese noise music: Hegarty, *Noise/Music*, 135.
[420] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 84–85.

encompassing, let alone many people's main job[421]. But there is no clear division, a characteristic that can partially be explained through (or serve as an explanation for?) the music's creation on a 'folk' level[422] but never reduced to this. Ron Schneiderman talks of how in the 1970s, he and friends would cover music by the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Cream and Santana and be influenced by fusion and jazz:

> And I'd say that, that would be stuff that led me more into, understanding the… how music and philosophy are sort of tied together, and you start playing certain guitar styles in the seventies or listen to certain records, and, I definitely come from a place and a time when, genre wasn't so regimented, you know, I would listen to Lynyrd Skynyrd and I also listened to John McLaughlin, and so I would be influenced by both of those, and, certainly Fripp and McLaughlin talking about deep philosophy with their approach to guitar was […] very important to my understanding of music, in that realm[423]

Here, philosophy needn't necessarily be understood as something explicitly cerebral: "from the later seventies and my later teenage years I definitely started understanding music more as a visceral, and not as a mental exercise" – a stance or rather practice that he designates "a therapeutic approach to the world, I would say, coping mechanisms"[424].

At the time that Mike Tamburo attended college and got into minimalism, he

> became quite aware that music and philosophy were very much, the same, the way that you are able to appreciate music, or, really meant a lot about who you were, and, the way that you played music, the way you approach music, it's not just the music, it's so much more of who you are, and what your being is, if you're able to hear every sound and appreciate every sound, as being like a beautiful thing, it almost, I mean, it just opens you up, […] the more open you can be, the more you can enjoy, and so, at that point I just, it was like the lid was blown off, and I just became open to every possibility[425]

It is in the same context that Tamburo discusses conducting chance experiments and, more generally, the impact of technology. Getting into playing music, Matt Valentine's "lessons came through other instruments and then the guitar was something that I kind of applied all that information into, in my own language". He talks about how he

> started realizing that it's a philosophy of how you live your life, you know, it's more than just, it's everything, and that's, probably the greatest thing about it, about it all, and to lead me up to the present as well, which is why I left, you know, got further and further away from urban centers and live up here now and live in the mountains of Vermont, it's because, that all affects

[421] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 111–116.
[422] cf. ibid., 42–48, 121–122.
[423] Interview with Ron Schneiderman (Brattleboro, July 13, 2009).
[424] Ibid.
[425] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).

> how I hear things and how I live my life and contribute whatever I contribute to society, it's all filtered through a relatively, the same viewpoint as the way that I make my art. [426]

Indeed, Joseph argues that

> the situation from which the arts were approachable after Cage was no longer evidently and unquestionably that of "objects" (even if musical performances) within a discipline or institution, but of specific techniques enacted within a field or realm of power effects.[427]

In these scenes, knowledge of such ideas is probably implied, although it is often more likely articulated to, for example, healthy personal (and interpersonal) artistic development than to specific political projects or general theorized conceptions of society. The Cagean "connection or articulation of politics and form"[428] is implied, sometimes reflected, and certainly an empowering moment of many of these musics. In the same chapter, Joseph refers to various groups who followed up "Cagean indeterminacy" by embracing "the end of the score as a source of compositional authority, the rise of collective improvisation, the direct impact of music as a powerful, affective force, and the radical democracy of group-made decisions."[429] The Theatre of Eternal Music, while not necessarily to be considered improvisational[430], may be seen as similar to those, at least if one takes Conrad's and Cale's views on its practice into consideration.[431] Such groups serve very well as partial, contingent precursors to many of the groups in these contemporary psychedelic / drone / noise scenes; of those mentioned by Joseph, maybe the Los Angeles Free Music Society (LAFMS) is particularly noteworthy in this context. The most obvious connection might exist through the work of LAFMS associates Smegma[432], much loved players and through both fields.

I already cited[433] a key quote on the appeal and importance of Sunburned Hand Of The Man in *Gender construction* and believe it is worth repeating here:

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[426] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Matt Valentine (January 17, 2013).
[427] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 85.
[428] Ibid., 85.
[429] Ibid., 106.
[430] cf. ibid., 106; 390–391, footnote 119.
[431] cf. ibid., 104–108.
[432] See David Keenan's cover story on Smegma in *The Wire*, where a collaborative concert by Smegma, Wolf Eyes, Chris Corsano and interviewee Heather Leigh Murray is described. cf. Keenan, David: Smegma, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 270 (August 2006), 37.
[433] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 140.

> a lot of the guys in Sunburned are just, they're talented, unbelievably talented, musical geniuses, and understand the history of the art that they're working with intuitively, and from early childhood have been listening to these records, and they understand where they fit in that history, […] and they also understand that, why things have to stay free, and they're able to keep it free and go anywhere at any time, musically[434]

Elaborating on this, Schneiderman says that

> to me that's the importance of keeping things free, just giving people a chance to express their individuality, or giving people a place to express their personal, you know, mantra, their personal, no one's holding hands, […] that support comes from people, supporting your desire to, express yourself, or, supporting you, having to express yourself in ways that are uncomfortable (MS: Yeah), and, if something's not right, you let somebody know, or you count on people that you know, it's that kind of thing, nothing special, it's just people working together, or existing together (MS: Yeah), that's all it is, it's been going on forever, you know, just, the machines are a little different[435]

So – are groups like Sunburned 'expressive' after all? I would say they are, at least, non-signifying, which isn't the same as non-expressive. Expression here is situated on a very personal, every-day level, not on the level of something particular that needs to be expressed directly through the music. The democracy modeled here is not necessarily theoretically grounded but related to a pluralistic, wide openness.

But here I am, discussing a small number of multi-headed music collectives while, as interviewee Britt Brown remarked in a recent Wire article, "2012 irrefutably marked a new high point in the slow-burning ascendancy of the solo project as the preferred vehicle for musical expression."[436] Brown rightfully argues that there are numerous reasons, financial and technological, for this tendency: the difficult economic situation (not just) for underground musicians leads to competition and complicates the sharing of money earned through music. At the same time, the Internet as well as improvements in and greater accessibility of certain tools, from pedals to music software, facilitate solo recording at the expense of less easily balanceable band relations. Exceptions to the trend are ones that "come with qualifiers", namely what Brown calls "couples bands"[437] and "'hired guns' set-up" (dominated by one single artist). While very much accepting the beneficial aspects that make solo projects important and useful, he fears for the future of bands comparable to Sonic Youth, Spacemen 3 and The Dead C, first and foremost for aesthetic / artistic reasons.

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[434] Interview with Ron Schneiderman (Brattleboro, July 13, 2009).
[435] Ibid.
[436] Brown: Streamlined Operations, 44.
[437] Ibid., 45; cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 134–136.

> "There is another part of me […] that sees communal creations as drawing on the best talents of everyone involved, with their indulgent tendencies whittled out by peer editing and group decision making."[438]

The standard band format has its own benefits indeed, its own forms of balance. For example, interviewee Glenn Donaldson discusses the benefits of bands balanced in gender terms, citing his own favorites Galaxie 500, The Go-Betweens, Throbbing Gristle and The Velvet Underground as examples:

> Music is communication, when you're writing music, you're communicating with the people that you're making music with, you're communicating with yourself and with an audience, and so if you're dealing in a band with men and women, you're addressing them, and there's a collaboration there, and I think it's much more interesting if there's men and women involved, much more expansive and less specific[439]

It also has its downsides, some of which I have discussed in *Gender construction* – technological advances like the introduction and easier access to loop pedals have, for example, made it easier for musicians to evade complicated band politics. As rock groups' inner dynamics can be predicated on segregation or exclusion in gendered terms, solo projects can offer female (or otherwise potentially excluded) musicians greater space than a band could.[440] Micropolitically, there certainly is no lack of arguments for a proliferation of solo artists. The concentration on solo work can be a remarkably fulfilling path free of certain barriers. But just as Brown longs for a return (of sorts) of the band, pointing towards – inherently social – potentials that can only be realized in the context of multiple people's collaboration, I think there are specific artistic, social and political opportunities offered by a *Horde* structure that maybe remain unseized in today's sub-underground climate. Jackie-O Motherfucker are still releasing music somewhat regularly (although, as far as I can tell, they haven't been particularly present as a collective recently – actually, soon after writing this, I realized that they were going to play a concert[441] in San Francisco just hours after my thesis's projected upload). No-Neck Blues Band appears to be more or less defunct or at least

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[438] Brown: Streamlined Operations, 45.
[439] Interview with Glenn Donaldson (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[440] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 126–129; Bayton: *Frock Rock*, 38–39; Clawson, Mary Ann: Masculinity and skill acquisition in the adolescent rock band, in: *Popular Music* 18, 1 (1999), 99–114, especially 108; Kearney: *Girls Make Media*, 1–16.
[441] cf. Subteranean night @ Casa Sanchez, in: *Facebook*. https://www.facebook.com/events/519742594737648/. Last accessed: January 30, 2013. Thanks go out to interviewee Eva Saelens for spreading the word…

taking a break from full group collaboration[442]. Sunburned Hand of the Man are still active but appear to remain relatively quiet in comparison to earlier years. Asked about these questions, Britt Brown sees those groups' decreased presence in the context of his *Wire* piece:

> Democratic collectives like those are radically out of step with the current cultural mood, especially in light of the social/creative transformations that technology is wreaking right now. […] NNCK and Sunburned and such collectives were inevitably and inextricably based on the philosophy of pursuing art for art's sake, not careerist advancement. There were too [many] people involved, too much messy humanity, to possibly curtail the sound into something streamlined and brand-conscious, which is the goal of almost all independent musics these days, even the craziest micro-niches.[443]

Ron Schneiderman's 2009 interview in Brattleboro also hints at the varying states of activity of a group like Sunburned:

> Sunburned goes through phases of activity and non-activity, I live up here, the closest actual Sunburned member's about an hour away, in Massachusetts, other ones are two, three hours away, you get together sometimes, the Loft doesn't exist anymore, it's kind of decentralized[444]

Maybe the ideas of expansion and contraction or those of density touched on earlier could help in the conduct of a detailed micro-analysis of such band histories: with line-ups depending very much on context, on spatial and temporal factors, the vague Sunburned entity's density shifts, at times maybe decreasing to the point of non-activity[445] – although even then, the individual people involved will still most likely be in touch and have effects on each others' works and lives in one way or another.

Narrating early years' activities in a variety of groups in New York and Germany, Samara Lubelski recounts:

> So then the free aspect started playing into everything I did from that point on, […] it's interesting, something I found really strange was everyone got, it seemed almost *too* free, like free jazz started becoming a really strong influence in *all* of the projects, Metabolismus, Hall Of Fame, Tower and it somehow was, the end in a weird way and then all the groups started to kind of break down, […] it's so weird how you need this constant balance between structure and free,

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[442] cf. Spicer, Daniel: Unknown universe, in: *The Wire. Adventures in Sound and Music 342* (August 2012), 10–11.
[443] Personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (December 27, 2012).
[444] Interview with Ron Schneiderman (Brattleboro, July 13, 2009).
[445] Also see the numerous factors mentioned in particlewaveparticle: Interview with Sunburned Hand of the Man, March 28th 2011, in: *particlewaveparticle* (March 30, 2011). http://particlewaveparticle.wordpress.com/2011/03/30/interview-with-sunburned-hand-of-a-man-march-28th-2011/. Last accessed: January 29, 2013.

> you know, and, it's always questionable where does the structure come from, and how do you bring the free into it […][446]

Lubelski is one of those musicians who most clearly identify or postulate the interplay of structure and the free.[447] She relates notable changes in the scenes' (or rather, here: the local New York scene's) structures to such questions; talking about her work in Matt Valentine and Erika Elder's recent groups, Lubelski presents an example of musicians' individual 'vision' that became more important or overt over the years:

> I mean, Matt's work I felt like has gotten more and more, clear that he has a vision, you know, and that we should come to his vision and it's less about the, I mean as we all are it's less about the group dynamic, and it's more about supporting his function as a band leader or as a songwriter and I'm doing the same thing with my solo records, but, of course, touring with Matt, you know, then there's periods of things getting very loose live, you know, and that's always great[448]

"[T]he essence of before" is "still there" but "less present"; once one's development "culminates" in a certain personal idea and exercise of practice, "you need room to open up again because that's where you recharge"[449].

The *Horde* might be wild, sprawling, non-representative and non-signifying, but it isn't neutral. Such concepts are always gendered to some extent: Natalie Mering says that

> women associated with women are pretty rare, just 'cause there's not as many to amass a tribal band of women type feeling that it's more like they're kinda on the outskirts kinda integrated, and so that also could explain why, there's somewhat of a propelling action as being a solo female musician, because there is no other women around you, necessarily[450]

But it's not just 'tribal bands' that are of interest – hierarchic forms might inspire too. Mering recounts that

> when I was touring I felt a lot of the time, like, I was daydreaming about being like a female Captain Beefheart or something, […] but I had to be compared in terms of individualism, not sound, but just in terms (MS: Yeah) of creativity and individualism, I'd be up there or I'd like to be up there with him, so it's like a habit to think of the *female* version of such, even though that term is kinda false in itself, 'cause there's no carbon copy of anybody (MS: Yeah) male or female, but, it would be really neat and appealing to see a feminine force that, happened to be, that independent, that'd be *really* cool, like a musical empress […] and those are really old weird archaic terms, but I don't mean it in terms of a societal (MS: Yeah) popularity[451]

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[446] Interview with Samara Lubelski (New York City, July 8, 2009).
[447] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 173–174.
[448] Interview with Samara Lubelski (New York City, July 8, 2009).
[449] Ibid.
[450] Interview with Natalie Mering (Doylestown, July 15, 2009).
[451] Ibid.

Rather, Mering considers these concepts "in terms of connection" and "influence on the music scene and funding and how things go"[452]. These scenes aren't entirely ahierarchic: those who occupy important nodes in the social system, to use language based on Froschauer and Lueger, certainly are in an advantageous, potentially admired position. I feel this is an important reminder to be inserted at this point.
Diedrich Diederichsen wrote the articles cited here between 2003 and 2005. With coverage of the Free Folk Festival then much more recent, this certainly was a time differing decidedly from now in terms of relative media exposure for *Horde* bands. In addition, the factors Brown discusses apply just as much to unwieldy bands of this type as to more standardized band structures. The future doesn't seem to belong to wilder band structures of this type, especially considering the solo format might be even more inviting to younger DIY musicians growing up with digital technology. Nonetheless, I propose the *Horde* as an inviting and beneficial format for socially and politically conscious, adventurous musical activities – based on what has been discussed thus far and on aspects that will be discussed later.

A discussion of power relations and techniques can go further beyond the numerous aspects laid out here. Later in *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, Joseph argues that Cage failed to engage with forms of power other than sovereign power; other forms (discipline and control) feed into Joseph's book and the works he is writing about. Among the numerous modes of artistic practice grappling with the legacy (but also the very presence) of John Cage discussed by Joseph is La Monte Young's early work. Of particularly interesting import for this thesis are Joseph's words on Young's *2 Sounds* for which he "so amplified a limited number of sounds that he effectively rendered them environmental, creating a sort of sonic architecture."[453] Cage articulated his own interest in this type of work in ways different to Young's own. Whereas for Cage, who likened the experience of listening to such pieces to one's view through a microscope, such 'sonic architecture' allowed one to realize that the sound's components are contingent and constantly changing, Young considered the individual sounds separate worlds of their own, "return[ing] precisely the totality and objecthood that Cage sought to dissolve into an open, multiplicitous field. Young, in other words, sought to restore the transcendence Cage sought to dismantle"[454] and thus also reintroduced certain

[452] Ibid.
[453] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 112.
[454] Ibid., 115.

power relations between sound and listener.[455] I am not in the position to discuss my interviewees' relationship to their sounds and audiences, but related questions may be asked here.

To Mike Tamburo,

> a live experience is, it's a social experience, you're creating the environment for your listener, it's almost like you're giving your listener a gift, you're affecting their thinking, affecting their consciousness, you're affecting the way that they're experiencing time, you know, it's all happening in front of you live and, it's just, it's beautiful to me, there's nothing like the live music experience, just seeing the energy of the person that's *super* into what they're doing, that, doesn't always translate onto the record[456]

The field described by Tamburo probably isn't ahierarchic, yet seems, at the very least, benevolent, open and – crucially – social (rather than natural?).

One particularly interesting part of the conversation between Paul LaBrecque, Labanna Bly and me concerns the creation or manipulation of reality (LaBrecque, talking about sigil magic: "this is what life is, you're creating your own reality"). Bly says:

> The cool way that it applies to like the music scene is how everyone really creates their own worlds (MS: Yeah), like, everyone's world's really fucking different, you know, and it's all really, we were talking about this earlier, personal, and one of the […] things to get better at like manifesting everything [inaudible], it's like [you] really have to go into all your different personalities, […] and that's where, we all kinda seem crazy from, or schizophrenic or something because you're exploring all these different worlds that you can create […][457]

What are these worlds, and who creates them, and how? One musician particularly interested in similar ideas (but also quite singularly so and thus not representative for these fields) is Spencer Clark. Take this bit from David Keenan's article on Hypnagogic pop:

> "There is a personal connection to memories that, through a process of spiritual recognition, can take the form of a world of its own," Clark suggests. "Creating symbols to identify mirrors in that world is an avenue for progress. For me it's really important that this personal world remains a reality, so that true communication is possible."[458]

As mentioned earlier, sound (and not just sound) here serves as a carrier for imagination, and this imagination can create worlds. However, it isn't entirely isolated and just a resolutely personal thing never connected to the outside. Spencer Clark

[455] cf. ibid., 113–117.
[456] Interview with Mike Tamburo (Pittsburgh, July 18, 2009).
[457] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009).
[458] Keenan: Childhood's End, 26.

differentiates between numerous aspects and locations of the social, between communication and involvement in scenes, by insisting that

> it's really important to understand that I don't, I'm not interested in like having an experience with a bunch of people, I'm interested in having a personal experience that can be concentrated and deep enough so that it might translate to other people (MS: Yeah), yeah, and I think it's important to find stuff like that[459]

If what Mark Fisher calls 'capitalist realism' "act[s] as a kind of invisible barrier constraining thought and action"[460], maybe such "possible worlds"[461] (Maurizio Lazzarato) offer potential alternatives – especially if they are articulated / aligned to broader projects. Possible worlds are created by "[i]mages, signs and statements"[462], which aren't representative but help constitute what can be real… if it is realized. This is particularly potent if 'imagination' isn't limited to the mind, but rather expanded to include the body, to contribute to "new ways of feeling and being"[463]. The invocation of such worlds is neither necessarily emancipatory nor regressive; in this case, it is at least seen as beneficial to the individual. 'Hypnagogic pop', not least Clark's work, is described by David Keenan as "a form of psychic self-surgery through rituals of recuperation"[464], which ties in with Clark's remarks and ideas on finding an understanding of one's self, one's feelings, as inspired by esotericist PD Ouspensky[465]. I would argue that how such worlds' potentials are actualized depends on specific contexts and articulations: but here, the theme of Clark "being really hesitant to identify with anything other than this vision" must return. Such 'possible worlds' will never be entirely free of anything outside their imaginary constitutive elements, but at the same time, explicit alignment might be as damaging as can be to them.

At the very least, a certain (untutored) imaginative 'skill' might be found here, a predilection for the construction of 'possible worlds', a form of artistic practice that might have much greater potentials outside its own circle than expected. That which is seen as 'given' needs to be challenged, and such investment in imagination, also

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[459] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009).
[460] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 16.
[461] Lazzarato, Maurizio: Struggle, Event, Media, in: *republicart*. differences and representations (05/2003). http://www.republicart.net/disc/representations/lazzarato01_en.htm. Last accessed: January 13, 2013.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Gilbert, Jeremy: Capitalism, Creativity and Continuity in the Sonic Sphere, in: culturalstudies.org.uk. http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/creativity%20and%20continuity%20.pdf. Last accessed: January 22, 2013, 16–17.
[464] Keenan: Childhood's End, 31.
[465] cf. Keenan: Childhood's End; Spicer: Sliding Scales, 28.

conceived as impacting on "the level of corporeal affect"[466], might turn out to be a key aspect of such challenges. I think Labanna Bly's remarks quoted earlier are particularly relevant to such a view: rather than focusing on the singularity of a specific world, Bly points out a multitude or even multiplicity of (hopefully connectable) worlds, a refusal to be reduced to any world homogenized through capitalist realism or – see below – control. This multiplicity is necessary: "retreating into the private space of affects and diversity"[467] would hardly be oppositional in these times.

Another key aspect of Joseph's text that I want to single out here so as to help analysis and contextualization of these fields is, as mentioned earlier, his discussion of different forms of power. It is almost too easy to proclaim that artists from these scenes and / or their work appear to be very much in opposition to, or attempting an evasion of, "sovereign, repressive"[468] power. As noted earlier, these scenes' ahierarchic structures and (relatively) 'free' musics are in line with Cage's interest in the dismantling of power through the dismantling of form – while Joseph notes that Cage could only conceive of sovereign, transcendent, hierarchic power. One of the key observations of *Gender construction*, though not necessarily a surprising one, was these scenes' relative avoidance of such structures[469]: "a top-down affair, a vertical imposition, a standard, a rule, a 'tower.'"[470] Joseph contrasts Cage's escapist tendency to Morris's attempts at subversion (as modeled through his sculptures). Both, however, conceived of power as sovereign. As Joseph notes, there is nothing wrong with an engagement with sovereign power, which has been very present over time. "The era of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is filled with oppressive, hierarchical structures. Indeed, recent years have even seen the emergence of an overarching neosovereignty."[471] I will return to such ideas later in this thesis: opposition against a so postulated neosovereignty has probably been one of the more potent tendencies to unite musicians from these scenes in the service of explicitly political modes of activity. But as has been discussed via Joseph in chapter 2.1, power is multiple. In his discussion of Morris's and Young's respective works, Joseph introduces the concept of disciplinary power as theorized by Michel Foucault. This mode of power can only be analyzed after power has been recognized as

[466] Gilbert: Capitalism, Creativity and Continuity, 16.
[467] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 77.
[468] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 132.
[469] cf. for example Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 198.
[470] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 132.
[471] Ibid., 133.

being active not just on the transcendent but also on the immanent level, for example through "limitations on or inherent structurings of actions and behaviors"[472], thus "coursing through and even producing subjects out of bodies."[473] Deleuze writes on Foucault's "*disciplinary societies*"[474]:

> The individual never ceases passing from one closed environment to another, each having its own laws: first, the family; then the school ("you are no longer in your family"); then the barracks ("you are no longer at school"); then the factory; from time to time the hospital; possibly the prison, the preeminent instance of the enclosed environment.[475]

Discipline isn't adequately described as repressive; it is a productive force.[476] In *Gender construction*, I already brought up the distancing from institutionalized knowledge, the autonomous trajectory that can be observed in these scenes.[477] A distinctive, not necessarily representative but certainly noteworthy example should be noted here. Matt Valentine "went to a high school that didn't have walls, it was set up by, originally by a lot of people who were like Vietnam, veterans *or* dodgers of the war, total protesters of the war" where he "had the freedom that you would normally not get until college, for some people not even till your sophomore / junior year of college, I had in high school, and most of my friends were older and were in garage bands and things like that and, so I got turned on to, sort of the counterculture"[478]. That school plays an important role in Valentine's narrative of freedom and openness. The 'closed environments' of disciplinary power are silent opponents hindering openness.

Collectives like Sunburned Hand Of The Man and No-Neck Blues Band refuse to be disciplined: their stresslessness, their unhurried playing may evade dominant disciplinary power – or at least models a different type of discipline. At the same time, the freedoms and opportunities for what Bruce Russell, discussing improvisation, calls "self-determination"[479] allow even solo artists an avoidance of determinant institutions. DIY activities may be both anti-sovereign and anti-disciplinary, at least going by how David Keenan conceptualizes them (see chapter 4.2). I think it is important, however,

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[472] Ibid., 135.
[473] Ibid., 135–137.
[474] Deleuze, Gilles: Postscript on the Societies of Control, in: *October* 59 (Winter 1992), 3.
[475] Ibid., 3.
[476] cf. Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 400–401, footnote 81.
[477] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 111.
[478] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009). Some aspects of Valentine's high school (era) experiences are investigated in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 106.
[479] Russell, Bruce: Contra-Fludd/contra-Kepler. The disharmony of the spheres extolled in ten theses, in: *Left-handed blows. Writing on sound 1993–2009*, (Auckland 2009), 31, footnote 12.

not to see such ('free folk', as in "liberated people"[480]) practice that refuses to be disciplined by, for example, market forces and their media as leading towards the ideal of the liberated individual[481]. All these options involve forms of discipline – often potentially oppositional ones that, with further research and immersion not least in Foucault's thought, might be talked of in terms of counter-conduct, as Joseph describes the Theatre of Eternal Music's strict regime:

> The Theatre of Eternal Music engaged in a self-imposed form of communal self-regulation turned towards ends (whether understood from Conrad's perspective or Young's) that were almost entirely other than those of conventional Western music and harmony.[482]

Running a DIY label or moving to the country to work within an autonomous scene is neither easy nor simply escapist but requires a certain dedication to such endeavors and lifestyles. I have conceptualized these musics, these scenes (via David Keenan and Matt Valentine) as 'free *folk*' because they are constituted through social relations, through friendships; also, the trope of said musics being about friends playing music together is certainly present[483]. Nonetheless, great dedication is needed to uphold those very opportunities. 'Friends playing music together' thus isn't a politically neutral activity free of power relations: even or especially where professional channels are avoided, a certain disciplined reiteration of the basics of the assumed 'freedom' is needed. "All they need to do is to organise the space you move in."[484] What results, however, is not the *liberated* individual. As Foucault says, "[t]he individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation."[485] This isn't meant to make a mockery of the often highly individual(ized) trajectories of these scenes' musicians, or of their admiration for other (perceived) individuals, and it isn't meant to suddenly suggest that all these often emancipatory DIY activities are futile. Instead, it is a warning of any concept, of any artistic plan that postulates the possibility of a self-fulfilling, liberated individual entirely free of the impact of power relations.

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[480] Matt Valentine's definition of free folk as quoted in Keenan: Keenan: AP Lecture.
[481] cf. Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 400–401, footnote 81.
[482] Ibid., 142.
[483] cf. Spiegel: Gender construction, 69–70, for how this played into my ways of contacting musicians, and 129–137 for general elaborations on friendship in these scenes.
[484] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 239.
[485] Foucault, Michel: Two Lectures, in: Dirks, Nicholas B. / Eley, Geoff / Ortner, Sherry B. (eds.): *Culture / Power / History. A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton 1994), 214.

The most overtly disciplined / disciplinary example of artistic practice that I have encountered among my interviewees is Eric Carbonara's[486] practice as a guitarist. Talking about how he accessed his individual path as a dedicated solo instrumentalist, Carbonara says that

> the idea of being, the interpreter, through music seemed like something that really made sense to me, so, devoting myself to a higher calling, you know, a, like, musical truth, I don't know if I'll be able to explain what I mean by that but, a just a, like a universal truth, that music conveys […][487]

He relates this to

> this idea called *Nada Brahma* which is a Hindi term that means, it translates to 'sound god', and, it means, that sound is, the voice of the divine, and music is the organization of sound, so music is the language in which the divine speaks to humanity, so a musician is the interpreter of the divine, so […] a musician is essentially like a priest, and that's basically how I feel[488]

His path involves "making sacrifices" and careful planning dedicated to the "greater goal" of leading a sustainable life as a dedicated musician. For Eric Carbonara, music is "not a very social thing […] any more"[489]; however, he is very much involved in solo instrumentalist circles, and his political views show knowledge of the importance of the social. In *Gender construction*[490], I mentioned his involvement in work on and sustenance of a compound of houses hosting numerous musicians in Fishtown, Philadelphia. This can be considered an attempt at sustaining an autonomous culture. Some further thoughts of Carbonara's on this compound and its inhabitants are telling – he "very much feel[s] in tune with what they're doing, in a political way" and discusses

> living more organically, and, cultivating networks of shows where you can have house show-, play in someone's garden (MS: Yeah), go to different cities and play in people's gardens, and pass the hat around, and make more than you'd make at a club, and, I feel like, there's ways that, you can cultivate these networks (MS: Yeah) of people, of like-minded people, that you can sustain the scene […][491]

Carbonara opposes this to an exploitative, corporate culture, criticizing

> all the big corporations that run these like Clear Channel, in here, it's all these companies that, run these booking agencies and these concert promoters, and they own these clubs and shit, and you play in some of them and they pull like 250 dollars off the door, and the sound guys are

[486] cf. Spiegel: Gender construction, 101, 117–118.
[487] Interview with Eric Carbonara (Philadelphia, July 16, 2009).
[488] Ibid.
[489] Ibid. This quote appeared in Spiegel: Gender construction, 117–118 already, as did part of the quote discussing Carbonara's "higher calling".
[490] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 130–131.
[491] Interview with Eric Carbonara (Philadelphia, July 16, 2009).

> dickheads, and it sounds like shit, and the drinks are expensive, and no one has fun, and it's just kind of a creatively stifling environment […][492]

Most recently, Carbonara has

> become more politically active on a local level, getting directly involved in community and neighborhood campaigns to fight blight and littering, helping to organize neighbors to build a playground in an abandoned lot, that kind of thing… I've lent support for arts and music education within the schools of the area I live in, but don't currently teach myself… I think my involvement echoes a natural progression of someone who buys a home when they're younger and gradually becomes more rooted in the community[493]

Carbonara's discipline appears similar to the Theatre of Eternal Music's 'counter-conduct' but, certainly, needs to be differentiated from it to some extent. Structurally, these cases are quite dissimilar; what Joseph writes about is a group of musicians practicing such disciplined conduct together, whereas Carbonara has been following his "higher calling" by taking a dedicated solo instrumentalist's path. At the same time, as discussed in *Gender construction*[494], Carbonara isn't *really* alone on his path but is involved in a web of solo instrumentalists, records other people's musics and applies his (micro-)political project to his immediate, non-musical surroundings: a singular trajectory doesn't have to imply all-transcending individualism. This hints at a second aspect that makes it hard to carelessly apply the Theatre of Eternal Music's model of counter-conduct as elaborated by Joseph to Carbonara's project: Carbonara's goals appear to be defined transcendentally *and* socially. The same can be said for the Theatre of Eternal Music itself, but in its case, individual members' approaches differed.[495] I am not implying that one mode of setting goals cancels the other or necessarily determines all future activities on the counter-conductor's part but rather suggesting that a closer analysis of Carbonara's practice would have to take into account his trajectory's multiplicitous character, despite its superficial linearity.

Control is "perhaps the most advanced [aspect of contemporary power]"[496]. According to Deleuze, institutions are in crisis and disciplinary societies have been giving way to 'societies of control'; he references Burroughs, Foucault and Paul Virilio (who "is continually analyzing the ultrarapid forms of free-floating control that replaced the old

[492] Ibid.
[493] Personal email correspondence with Eric Carbonara (November 30, 2012).
[494] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 118, 131.
[495] cf. Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 141.
[496] Ibid., 58.

disciplines operating in the time frame of a closed system."[497]). Whereas Deleuze likens disciplinary enclosures to molds, "controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point."[498] And

> just as the corporation replaces the factory, *perpetual training* tends to replace the *school*, and continuous control to replace the examination. Which is the surest way of delivering the school over to the corporation.[499]

Individuals are replaced by 'dividuals'. Unlike the simple (societies of sovereignty) and energy-involving (disciplinary societies) machines of the past, the new ones "operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy and the introduction of viruses." Rather than enclosure, debt is highly relevant to control. Deleuze's depiction of changes in historical power relations is very linear in this text, although he certainly grants the possibility that, for example, "older methods, borrowed from the former societies of sovereignty, will return to the fore, but with the necessary modifications."[500] This is mostly in line with Joseph's own take, although more linear: the prevailing of (modified) older methods appears to have great weight in *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*.[501] Similarly, Mark Fisher, referring to Deleuze's suggestion that debt is central to societies of control, exemplifies capitalist realism by suggesting that "the current education system both indebts *and* encloses students"[502]: disciplinary elements are still present.

How to deal with control from an emancipatory point of view, questioning dominant power relations / hierarchies? Joseph repeats a Burroughsian question:

> Who are you an agent for? From the perspective of the infrastructure of control withwin which The Flicker may already be seen to be functioning, the operative distinction is no longer subversion against sovereign form or autonomy against the strictures of the disciplinary institution, but rather the connection of biopolitical forces to either hegemonic apparatuses of normalization or heteronomous apparatuses of countercontrol. Negative feedback can be countered only by positive feedback and practices of regulation by practices of multiplicity, indeterminacy, and differentiation, operative wholly on a plane of immanence.[503]

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[497] Deleuze, Postscript: 4.
[498] Ibid. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[499] Ibid., 5. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[500] Ibid., 7.
[501] cf. Joseph: Beyond the Dream Syndicate, 337, 448, footnote 144.
[502] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 26. (Ephasis in the original text.)
[503] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 351–352.

I want to go further back in time to gather inspiration for this chapter's end: one band very much geared to the – attempted, always temporary – dismantling of control was Throbbing Gristle, known as (but so much more than) the founders of 'industrial music'[504], active primarily in the late 1970s and mid-2000s. Inspired by and in exchange with William S. Burroughs's ideas, Throbbing Gristle attempted to "thro[w the individual] out of their standard socialized patterns of thinking and behaving"[505] through a variety of techniques (extreme frequencies and sounds, untutored playing, controversial / transgressive subject matter, graphic imagery…). Paul Hegarty[506] connects this to Burroughs's historicizing of the Cartesian body / mind dualism and "idea of how to criticize rationalist society in a way that gets beyond the analytical."[507] Throbbing Gristle had to grapple with the issue of transgression not being sustainable: "Throbbing Gristle, like Bataille, aim to keep the taboo hovering nearby; what is the point of transgression if we are comfortable with it (in which case it isn't transgression, it being relative)?"[508] I have argued elsewhere[509] that Throbbing Gristle (and their predecessors, COUM Transmissions) developed a variety of tactics even beyond the challenging of taboos in order to remain irreducible to any categorization; their DIY label activities[510] should be considered part of this constant challenge. Simon Reynolds calls (early) industrial music "an 'authentic' psychedelia" due to its "impulse to blow minds through multimedia sensory overload" as well as "an obsession with sonic treatments and extreme effects"[511]. There are definitely parallels to be found in many corners of the scenes I am discussing – but how do they compare? I am sure that there are many projects that have embarked on paths similar to those of Throbbing Gristle, but their extreme experimentation on so many levels is hard to encounter here.

Glenn Donaldson recounts:

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[504] cf. Hegarty: Noise/Music, 106. For a useful and in-depth chronology of Throbbing Gristle's history (and that of the radical performance art group they emerged from, COUM Transmissions), although not including the band's 21st century reunion, see Ford, Simon: *Wreckers of Civilisation. The Story of COUM Transmissions & Throbbing Gristle* (London 1999).

[505] Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, 105.

[506] cf. ibid., 103–116.

[507] Ibid., 107.

[508] Ibid., 111.

[509] Spiegel, Maximilian Georg: *COUM Transmissions, Throbbing Gristle und ihr Werk zwischen DIY und Tabu* (unpublished seminar paper, Wien 2011). Other recommended texts that played into said seminar paper are: Büsser, Martin: *Wie klingt die Neue Mitte? Rechte und reaktionäre Tendenzen in der Popmusik* (Mainz 2001), 32–46.; Goddard, Michael: Sonic and Cultural Noise as Production of the New: The Industrial Music Media Ecology of Throbbing Gristle, in: Simon O'Sullivan / Stephen Zepke (Hg.), *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* (London / New York 2008), 162–172.

[510] cf. Cogan, Brian: "Do They Owe Us a Living? Of Course They Do!" Crass, Throbbing Gristle, and Anarchy and Radicalism in Early English Punk Rock, in: *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1, 2 (2009), 33–70.

[511] Reynolds, Simon: *Rip It Up and Start Again. Post-punk 1978–84* (London 2005), 224.

> I guess I was always, even back in the eighties, I was very interested in industrial music, but the early stuff, like Neubauten and Throbbing Gristle, just these ideas of non-musical sounds being used to make music, using tapes and non-instruments, […] someone wouldn't say that a tape recorder is a musical instrument, but these bands said that they were, so, then the idea of using sounds that you find or you hear and somehow using them in a composition or basing a song on a sound, the sound of the people working on a house next door or something like that, […] I was always really interested in experimenting, consciously experimenting[512]

What Donaldson gets out of early industrial music is actually quite Cagean: an experimental, exploratory openness, "the more general avant-garde notion of extending one's taste toward the acceptance and incorporation of nontraditional musical materials."[513] In Donaldson's case, this certainly implies an inherently political approach[514], but here he mostly situates Throbbing Gristle on level of expanded aesthetics. Having called "Wolf Eyes' electronics […] a gnarled reincarnation of Industrial culture's pioneers" and then compared a specific Wolf Eyes track to Slovenian band Laibach, Jim Haynes claims that "Wolf Eyes have turned from the underlying critiques within Industrial culture and have emphasised an authorship of visceral horror."[515] Asked about Throbbing Gristle's influence on Wolf Eyes, who had played several shows with the reunited project, Throbbing Gristle / COUM founding member Genesis Breyer P-Orridge suggests: "There seems to be a renaissance of bands that have been influenced by aspects of TG. They don't try and copy TG; they'll take one aspect of our experiments that they find interesting and they'll pursue that and explore it."[516] This seems to be quite an apt description to me; in the context of my paper, I would argue it also implies that what made Throbbing Gristle so singularly intriguing as a political project was that very multi-level attack on established conventions, always failing but constantly questioning control.

Further comments by Sunburned Hand Of The Man members Ron Schneiderman and Paul LaBrecque should also be helpful here. Schneiderman, reflecting on the experience of meeting, for example, like-minded Finnish musicians, says that

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[512] Interview with Glenn Donaldson (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[513] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 61
[514] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 139, 184.
[515] Haynes, Jim: Wolf Eyes. Slicer. Dead Hills, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 227 (January 2003), 81.
[516] Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, quoted in Licht, Alan: Invisible Jukebox. Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 271 (September 2006), 24.

> you start realizing this is just the way that, our species congregates and gets together, and there's a language and there's terms and there's histories and there's, there's characters and there's legend and there's all these things that are, you know, tied in, and they start mingling together and this culture gets bigger and bigger, or, in its *connectedness*, not in its individualness[517]

He points out how such a "fertile sort of community" that is "not aligned with a larger sort of control mechanism" "must scare people who are trying to keep some sort of status quo, some sort of control, or see the control as a way of propagating their economic stream or whatever":

> they use, they create the fear and they use the fear and fear is the one thing that, you know, when you get in front of a large group of people and you set out to let things happen without any sort of controls, without any mechanisms and you try to present yourself and pres-, and, exist in an area where there's no controls, that requires you to confront your fear, at the very least, if not just ignore and abandon it[518]

Around the time of his participation in bands like The Sons Of John Glenn and Bright, Paul LaBrecque lived in the same "student ghetto" as his musician brother and his friends who generally were younger than him and who thus lived in a "different time frame". Talking about the changes in media he witnessed over the years, LaBrecque, too, points out the political aspect of induced fear:

> You know, when I grew up, there was like three television channels and then like in 1980 (Labanna Bly: Yeah, [inaudible]), when the Reagan era came in, all of a sudden there was like, 25, 30 channels in every city, […] advertising became really fast and you know, the whole society became this kind of... you know, forcing fear onto people to make them buy things, making people feel guilty[519]

This tendency also involved the construction and spreading of specific new gender roles "in order just to sell products"[520].

Is Schneiderman talking about the type of control I have just introduced to this thesis? It might be dangerous to just apply such concepts based on shared terminology. However, Schneiderman's ideas here are very interesting and might be seen as situated at an intersection between discipline and control, with a community attempting sustainability outside of institutions and, at the same time, a transgressive anti-control element in live performance, where standardizing negative feedback is countered by the positive feedback of the (transgressive or psychedelic) performance's opening-up of musical-social options.

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[517] Ron Schneiderman, in: interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[518] Ron Schneiderman, in: interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[519] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009).
[520] Ibid.

Talking about her large ensemble activities with Coterie Exchange (based on the decidedly oppositional idea of "a small group of people who were coming together to open people up to the free exchange of ideas"[521]), Sharon Cheslow recounts:

> I wanted to bring together people who were doing punk and people who were doing noise, people who were doing improvised free jazz music, 'cause I saw the similarities, to me in my mind, you know, it's all just different ways of kind of trying to do creative music… and I wanted to create a vehicle for people to come together and represent themselves, because at that time in America, there was so much control and it felt like we were being censored, and we were not able to freely express ourselves, there really wasn't this avenue for dissent, you know, if you tried to dissent, you were considered a terrorist[522]

Here, too, fear appears to be a prime element of a specific time's power relations. I think it would be possible to find elements of sovereign, disciplinary and control power in a contextualization of this quote; what I think is important here for now is the connective element that serves to "open people up". Connectivity, a strength of these scenes and in particular of someone like Cheslow, is – I think quite obviously – of utmost importance to my own project and is thus often approached optimistically, but is not inherently emancipatory: "the ideology of connectivity"[523], examined by Jeremy Gilbert via Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, is actually a popular element of neoliberal capitalism[524] – and certainly of capitalist realism with its relations of control. But here, connectivity serves an opening move, arguably a disturbance in power relations, against normalization.

Of course, *The Flicker*, Joseph's chief example of artistic tackling of control, is one of a kind – and is analyzed extensively in *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*. A comparable analysis of potential challenges of control in American free folk / psychedelic / drone / noise underground context would have to take a similarly detailed approach to individual works, or at least individual artists' thought and trajectory. Here, the interview approach used thus far over the course of my project once again makes obvious its limitations: aesthetic considerations aren't given much room in these narratives whose initiation (through the original thesis project itself) focused on different, social elements. Just as importantly, unlike in Conrad's case, detailed critical writings on such artwork aren't quite as available or common. There are many

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[521] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (January 11, 2013). This part of the interview was already discussed in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 187.
[522] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[523] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 196.
[524] cf. ibid., 195–201.

connections, maybe even parallels between the work of Conrad and his peers on one side and that of the musicians discussed here on the other, but the more overtly conceptual and critical approach taken by Conrad in works like *The Flicker* differs remarkably from the more popular, everyday approach found in a lot of 'free folk' (et cetera) musicians' work. As Joseph writes, *The Flicker* can be considered psychedelic and countercultural.[525] But it is based on in-depth, quasi-scientific and pioneering considerations – whereas today's psychedelic musicians, while certainly searching and working hard, have decades of various forms of psychedelic (music) theory and practice to back them up. This doesn't have to be a problem, though; maybe the ruthless multi-level experimentation encountered in Conrad's (and Throbbing Gristle's) work is what is required.

The musicians I am writing about have an amazing amount of knowledge and tools at their hands, are aware of the openness of music and its histories; they tend to have experiences with the overtly social, ahierarchic, collective side of musical practice (although that is threatened somewhat by recent tendencies towards solo projects' dominance). The natural and social turns' lessons are, to some extent, internalized and up for grabs; their implications, to these recent musicians, aren't battled out in academia but offer great freedom on a quasi-folk level. Hierarchical form is almost routinely dismantled, and this remains a powerful practice. The construction of a direct line from Cage to these musics would be highly dubious, but many of his, and his younger contemporaries', interests and predilections seem to have succeeded in spreading into the wider art world. An aesthetics of immanence hasn't taken over the society for its own best, but is at least an important option on numerous levels for these contemporary artists, while transcendent form generally seems to be invoked for counterhegemonic purposes – or at least not for socially repressive practices. But maybe an underground worth its name will have to constantly struggle for further affective-aesthetic-technological innovation on an experimental basis so as to truly present an alternative or even opposition, rather than just any hobbyist niche. Similar questions will continue to accompany this text.

[525] cf. Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 431, footnote 134.

4 Unterminal Kaleidoscope[526]

This chapter's key text, Nadya Zimmerman's Counterculture Kaleidoscope, is quite different in approach from *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*. Whereas the latter had great impact on my project's methodological and theoretical levels in addition to its contents being discussed, Zimmerman's book, while important and forceful, will mostly serve as a provider of impulses on the level of content. It will kickstart a number of discussions on aspects central to my theses, partially expanding on what already featured in chapter 3, partially tracing new terrain.

4.1 The text

Counterculture Kaleidoscope opens with an introduction[527] to the book's subject and themes. Zimmerman starts out by discussing important progressive political movements and activities of the 1960s and their relevance to popular perceptions of the decade. However, she immediately goes on to outline the book's take on San Francisco's counterculture. Whereas both liberal and conservative commentators often tend to mythologize the 1960s (as "defined by laudable attempts at progressive social change in the face of a dominant, oppressive system"[528] and "as maniacally radical", respectively), Zimmerman wants to hint at "the decade's complexity", notably by putting the San Francisco (and especially Haight-Ashbury) counterculture's supposedly oppositional orientation into question. Responsible for many well-known cultural manifestations / products of their time ("the music and the lifestyle"[529]), the pluralist counterculture and its proponents are often connected to the era's progressive movements – connections that, according to Zimmerman, didn't exist to the extent that they could serve as a justifiable basis for an ascription of such a socio-political tendency to the counterculture. It is this idea that Zimmerman follows throughout the book, thus on the one hand thankfully debunking myths and pointing out grave contradictions in countercultural agents' image and presentation but on the other hand arguably risking to reduce the counterculture to a phenomenon of disingenuousness and privilege – at least

[526] A necessary reference to The Legendary Pink Dots, whose work has been a constant source of joy over the last few years and who appear to share an interest in the musics discussed here.
[527] Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 1–21.
[528] Ibid., 2.
[529] Ibid., 3.

that is the impression which remains.[530] But while Zimmerman also could have taken a broader and less inherently negative approach (just as my own thesis, building on an older one as it does, arguably paints a rather anemic picture of the scenes in question), many of her points can be useful in discussing the political implications of life in music scenes past and present.

Of course, Zimmerman has specific ideas as to what the counterculture was, rather than just using the term arbitrarily. *Counterculture Kaleidoscope* "investigates the development and disintegration of the countercultural sensibility in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district"[531], not least through an analysis of sounds and lyrics:

> This book will develop and give detail to the growth of the San Francisco counterculture, examine how it perceived itself in relation to the "outside" world and what tools it used to define itself, trace the evidence and reasons for the counterculture's deterioration, and show that it was only after the 1967 Summer of Love that history began to define the premises of the countercultural sensibility not as tools of disengagement but as tools of protest, not pluralistic opportunities but agendas to be followed.[532]

What Zimmerman calls "the nondialectical aspect of the countercultural sensibility"[533], its belief in 'dropping out', living lives outside of mainstream culture (on which, nonetheless, it was somewhat dependent), its 'anything goes' ethos, was easily misinterpreted or manipulated. The counterculture, according to Zimmerman's book, was more interested in negation than in opposition but was nonetheless interpreted in terms suggesting the latter. Thus, Zimmerman wants to avoid an approach to the topic that evaluates the counterculture based on its accomplishments or lack thereof, as that type of approach – based on the counterculture's misinterpretation as oppositional – implies there *was* something the counterculture wanted to accomplish.

Zimmerman structures her book and constructs her argument through the analysis of four different countercultural personas. The first of these is the 'outlaw persona'[534], which "was integral to the newly developing counterculture in San Francisco, not so much for its *actual* manifestations of aggression, but for its *potential* for disregarding or breaking the law"[535], allowing for an escape from societal conventions. Zimmerman

[530] Also see this review: Herriges, Greg: Nadya Zimmerman. Counterculture Kaleidoscope: Musical and Cultural Perspectives on Late Sixties San Francisco, in: *Popular Music and Society* 33, 1 (2010), 132–134.
[531] Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 4.
[532] Ibid., 5.
[533] Ibid., 6.
[534] Ibid., 22–51.
[535] Ibid., 25. (Emphasis in the original text.)

discusses the outlaw persona in relation to race and, intertwined with it, economics (not least in terms of the gentrification of certain areas that would turn into part of the counterculture's base). The counterculture was able to appropriate elements of struggle against racial discrimination (notably the Black Panthers' "antiofficial, outlaw sensibility"[536]) in lifestyle terms while hardly getting involved in such struggles (and other participatory, egalitarian ones) itself. Its ambivalent connections to the blues (and its "mobility and uniqueness"[537]) are another field of discussion – notably, countercultural musicians' (blues) influences adding to / proving their individuality.

The chapter discussing the 'exotic persona'[538] explicitly deals with the geopolitical context the counterculture found itself in. It attempted to evade the cold war dialectic (constructed not least through the USA's anti-communist containment policy), but

> [t]he issue for the counterculture […] was not so much about creating modes of disengagement. Individualism, libertarianism, self-reliance, and isolationism were already core to the countercultural lifestyle and the scene in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. The issue was crafting the cultural clues, the telling symbols, and the coded flavors of the countercultural disengagement practice.[539]

This was achieved not least through an interest in "fantastical Other worlds"[540] via exoticism and mysticism. As this was nonetheless embedded in the "dialectical, neo-colonialist policies"[541] of the time and dependent on capitalist consumerism, Zimmerman points out what she considers a certain complicity of the counterculture in these policies.

Starting with a discussion of *Easy Rider*, Zimmerman examines the 'natural persona'[542] and the related ideal of freedom – one that, matching its lack of actual opposition to the mainstream, wasn't entirely distinct from mainstream culture's own. According to Zimmerman,

> [n]ature became a mediator of sorts, as the counterculture systematically obscured its very real reliance on technological advancements and capitalist structures of mainstream America via a complex, and often contradictory, engagement with them."[543]

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[536] Ibid., 33.
[537] Ibid., 38.
[538] Ibid., 52–90.
[539] Ibid., 55.
[540] Ibid., 56.
[541] Ibid., 60.
[542] Ibid., 91–123.
[543] Ibid., 94.

The Grateful Dead are the band most centrally discussed in this chapter which points out contradictions in their nature-oriented, even Robin Hood-like image, touching on topics of gender, the appropriation of jazz elements and the contradictions in the use of drugs to access nature's "transformative experiences"[544].

The book's chapter on the 'new age persona'[545] confronts further contradictions in the counterculture's wish to 'drop out', especially the double standard characterizing the idea of "free love", fed by a "spiritual-philosophical-sexual alliance"[546]. Access to or roles assigned in free love were gendered; characteristically, free love was about negation rather than a positive alternative model, thus reifying patriarchal structures and the exploitation of women. Here, Zimmerman returns to the observation that dropping out was impossible due to the counterculture's ties to the mainstream, even providing the opportunity "to be lazy and self-indulgent", and that political engagement suffered from the attempted "elevat[ion of] the personal over the social"[547].

She closes the book with "Lessons from the End of the Counterculture"[548]. In the context of writing about Charles Manson's aim for stardom, Zimmerman suggests that "the counterculture, when not tied to a particular geographical location, was transformed into a countercultural ethos that could easily become a profiteering mechanism."[549] Manson's crimes and the violence manifesting at the 1969 Altamont Festival (in whose discussion she points out a certain lack of responsibility on the countercultural side) both, in Zimmerman's view, "exemplified what could happen when the countercultural sensibility became an empty signifier."[550] The counterculture's own self-advertisement added to its decline by attracting those interested in immediate gratification. Zimmerman closes by denouncing the irresponsibility and excesses that could be encountered at the counterculture's end, pleading for an avoidance of those same mistakes in present contexts.

A few short references to connections will be inserted here. Talking about the musics coalescing in events like the Brattleboro Free Folk Festival, Spencer Clark comments:

[544] Ibid., 119.
[545] Ibid., 124–154.
[546] Ibid., 129.
[547] Ibid., 153.
[548] Ibid., 155–175.
[549] Ibid., 161–162.
[550] Ibid., 168.

> A lot of that music is like coming from being super into The Grateful Dead and stuff like that, and I think The Grateful Dead is cool but it's just like whatever, it's not my zone, you know what I mean? In California, everyone has a Grateful Dead t-shirt when you're 14 (MS laughs) you're just like, "I don't really know if I'm into that", I was more into industrial music and shit when I was a kid[551]

In an interview, Matt Valentine remarks that "all of our records have exploratory sections and we've always embraced mixed modes and improvisations, even on the studio recordings. that's a massive [jerry] garcia influence right there."[552] Further comments on Vermontian connections to the Grateful Dead will be encountered later in this chapter. Jeffrey Alexander is another Dead fan in these scenes.[553] Sharon Cheslow was interested in the Diggers, who

> were one of the pivotal forces in San Francisco, [such as] the Haight Ashbury Free Health Clinic (MS: *M*hm), and they would give away free food and free clothes, and a lot of the attitude of free giving (MS: Yeah) came from the Diggers. I really do feel that that's what changed from, say, punk to free noise and improvised music was there's more of an attitude of "what can I do for free?", "what can I do to *give* to people?" because by that time, punk had become mainstream, Green Day (MS laughs), so you know, it had become part of mainstream culture, rock culture, I mean, all of us were not interested in being a part of that[554]

While I won't be discussing the Diggers in this chapter, I think it is quite interesting to contrast this quote with Zimmerman's remarks on the Diggers[555], which focus more on the contradictions in their work, arguably analogous to the general difference in approach between Zimmerman's and my work, neither of which, I think, is essentially wrong. However, it might be useful to, in the future, present a more integrative study aware both of the positive vectors of, for example, the Diggers as well as ideological contradictions that should certainly be exposed, not least to enable reflection.

4.2 Minor cultural kaleidoscope

How do the various musical-social fields discussed by my theses relate to the outlaw persona, or outlaw tropes in general? There certainly are outlaw tropes to be found in

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[551] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009).
[552] Miller, Joe: Fables of the Reconstruction: Matt Valentine Interview, in: *Spork*. http://twistedspork.blogspot.co.at/2012/05/fables-of-reconstruction-matt-valentine.html. Last accessed: January 31, 2013.
[553] cf. Parisse, Bruno: Le Pot Pourri Questionnaire: Jeffrey Alexander, in: *foxy digitalis* : features (March 6, 2007). http://www.digitalisindustries.com/foxyd/features.php?which=227. Last accessed: January 31, 2013.
[554] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (January 11, 2013).
[555] cf. for example Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 32–33, 99–101.

elaborations on free folk musics, but they aren't necessarily the same. The societal outlaw potential Zimmerman writes about is present, but not to a particularly notable extent. No doubt, musicians from these circles have broken the law every now and then, but this usually isn't a question of status and image; and John Moloney's stories in David Keenan's original article[556] on the 'New Weird America', while certainly authentic reports from his youth[557], don't appear particularly representative of these heterogeneous and dynamic scenes (but then, what does?). Of course: many musicians, not least those from older generations still active, have more or less adventurous stories to tell; and although musicians in these scenes are often from privileged backgrounds, they often live in relatively precarious situations now[558]. But while quasi-bohemian, precarious lifestyles may in some cases have been pioneered by artists, they are by no means exclusive to such circles nowadays.[559] The perceived outlaw-ness may best be located on a different level. Of course, it shouldn't be forgotten that Zimmerman herself too points out the connections between social and musical outlaw status, certain elements of countercultural musics being "outside musical laws, outside the boundaries of traditional social behavior."[560]

It seems apt here to once again insert a crucial quote by Labanna Bly as mentioned in *Gender construction*, where I said that "[s]omewhat echoing this thesis's approach to what 'free folk' may mean, Bly narrates her discussion with a fellow musician on that term and its application:"[561]

> I'm like, "well, think about it, folk back in the day, like, when America first started and, it was just like this impression, visceral kind of outcast thing at that time, so I mean and that's kind of what noise and (Paul LaBrecque: Yeah) that whole genre has become, […] not going with the flow, going against it[562]

Here, an oppositional element can be detected as well as as one of 'dropping out'. LaBrecque considers these activities "a reaction to our surroundings" and argues that "we're all being true to what's inside of ourselves and playing with what we have, and the talents that we have and the ability that, you know, the physical things that are in

[556] cf. Keenan: The Fire Down Below, 37–39.
[557] cf. kris: Sunburned Hand of the Man. Mind of the Brothers, in: *smallflowers press* 1 (2004), 22–63.
[558] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 111–112, 119.
[559] cf. Raunig, Gerald: *Industrien der Kreativität. Streifen und Glätten* 2 (Zürich 2012), 23–36.
[560] cf. Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 25.
[561] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 179.
[562] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009).

front of us (MS: Yeah) that make the noise that can express ourselves"[563]. Brainstorming on political connections of these musics, Tara Burke suggests that that "this is more the white suburban thing, I mean, 'cause to me, I look at this music, it's definitely *not*, like, pop music, it's not what you hear on the radio, it's not what your average American listens to". Having commented on suburbia through reference to TV show *Weeds*, she continues, saying that

> maybe it's some sort of reaction to that 'cause I know me, growing up, I… I always kind of, didn't wanna be that […], normal American, or I didn't wanna live the normal American stereotype where, you know you, have a full-time job and you have, this nice house in the suburbs and, so... when I first started hearing, yeah, this music, it was just very different and unusual and, I think anything like that appeals to me and I guess maybe it's the same with most people I know because they experienced a lot of normalcy, I mean, I, don't know people's family history or their upbringings, so much, really, except for some of my close friends but...[564]

What these 'outcasts' are differentiated from, possibly even the 'law' against which to measure the 'outlaw', is (perceived) mainstream culture in general. This is what Keenan, too, thinks underground music should actually *oppose*: in comparison to some earlier noise's use of beats for purposes of contagion,

> the new Noise music seems more seduced by the pop narcotic, voguing to YouTube samples, half in love with a fever dream of pop stardom while breathing a collective sigh of relief that any notion of opposition can be given up in the face of an electronic culture where everyone is a sex symbol or a critic or a personality or a video star.[565]

Keenan also criticizes Not Not Fun Records for, in his view, giving in to such tendencies, suggesting that this "has seriously damaged their claim to stand in opposition to glib internet culture and the politics of the empty posture."[566] Keenan's opposition to perceived mainstream culture also ties in with his use of the word 'illegitimate'. "CD-Rs and cassettes […] dispense with any notion of permission

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[563] Ibid. This quote also played into my first thesis in my discussion of approaches to instruments. cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 122–123.
[564] Interview with Tara Burke (Orwigsburg, July 17, 2009). Not the most streamlined version of this quote due to minor organization mishaps on my part – see page 77, footnote 348 of this thesis for further information.
[565] Keenan: The Sedition of Song, 40.
[566] Ibid. Keenan specifically singles out the music of Maria Minerva; I would like to take a contrary stance here, suggesting that her strange mix of skewed pop modes, YouTube aesthetics and seemingly random theory-related signifiers (certainly based in her particular life world) is a genuinely intriguing project, more an (always implicated) case of personal engagement with the very reality of "glib internet culture" than a full-on affirmation. But we'll agree to disagree, no doubt! For an interesting article on Minerva's work, see Power, Nina: Divine Styler, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Sound And Music* 342 (August 2012), 24–27.

altogether"[567]; they are chief means of communication in the psychedelic underground and considered "illegitimate media"; no one else needs to permit one's music to be released. Such a DIY ethos is an element of "artistic seriousness" and helps disseminate the music when it's "at its most potent and when it can really interact with the world in an interesting way"[568], before any codification.

Alongside the general tendency towards care in these scenes and the unhurriedness encountered in sprawling collectives, and beyond considerations of aesthetics' integrity, this also remains a fragile alternative model to the "indefinite postponement"[569], "permanent and ubiquitous measurement" and "perpetual anxiety"[570] encountered in capitalist realism. Sharon Cheslow advocates a DIY ethos "because unfortunately mainstream culture has such a stranglehold on what we hear and what we see", in the face of which DIY can enable creative control, free self-expression and the building of community (to "get the creative support and nurturing you need"[571]). Mapping the difficulties of touring in the United States, Eva Saelens talks about young disinterested audiences who

> don't really care to support you or like care about what your life is like, that you're making a sacrifice to play to them, they don't really care that much, and to be honest, I don't really blame them, because, I mean I'm disappointed that so many American young people have such shitty taste in culture, but I'm not surprised either 'cause mainstream culture is so intensely consuming, people don't know how, don't know there's other options, *I* didn't know there was other options[572]

This isn't an empty elitist dismissal of mainstream culture: Saelens later goes on to talk about disabilities imposed on her as a woman "growing up in such a poisonous culture, this very mainstream American culture"[573]. Maybe mainstream culture is unhealthy and fails to provide the openness and care present in certain artistic-social fields.

There is a lot to be said about the psychedelic underground's (potential) tendencies towards exoticism; take, for example, Kandia Crazy Horse's polemic "Freak Show. Race, rock and the New Weird America"[574]. At the danger of appearing to shy away

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[567] Keenan, David: Burning chrome, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 297 (November 2008), 41.
[568] Keenan: AP Lecture.
[569] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 51.
[570] Ibid., 52.
[571] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[572] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[573] Ibid.
[574] Crazy Horse, Kandia: Freak Show. Race, rock and the New Weird America, in: *Perfect Sound Forever* (February 2007). http://www.furious.com/perfect/freakshow.html. Last accessed: January 11, 2012.

from truly controversial issues, I feel I am currently not in the position to discuss this in-depth, thus transforming it into one of several topics[575] I feel are crucial but whose more extensive study I have to postpone. A type of intrinsic exoticism is delineated by Britt Brown along gender and geographic lines. Concerts by groups that are (relatively) minoritarian from a specific point of view might generate greater interest; in one of Brown's examples,

> if a band tours through and they're from Finland, it's like, "oo, it's a little more exotic", […] but if it's like, "oh, they're from Brooklyn (MS laughs), yet another fucking band from Brooklyn", it's no big deal. There are *wonderful amazing* bands from Brooklyn but (MS laughs) it seems like you're being flooded with those, you know what I mean, just like with LA. Like, "oh cool, you're from LA, that's so generic" (MS laughs), […] it's an extra level of exoticism, […] so there's a way that I think gender relations spice that up. I definitely think it used to be true far more because I think that, you know, women in bands were so much rarer even just a couple decades ago that *any* women who did participate and were at all visible became almost an instant icon […][576]

The modernist, psychedelic, 'weird' impulse certainly provides a good platform for exoticism. But at the same time, many of these contemporary musicians' interests aren't reducible to commercial interests[577] or dropping out. Matt Valentine's elaborations on gender in the Indian musics he and Erika Elder have adapted[578] hints at a much deeper involvement (and at a potentially emancipatory Deleuzian becoming-woman rather than being-Indian) as does, of course, Eric Carbonara's singular path, although the latter is rather distinct due to his involvement[579] in actual structures of Indian music. Also, numerous musicians in these scenes have studied ethnomusicology and anthropology – there is, at least, a genuine interest in 'other' cultures to be found and, at least in some cases, learning about historical / cultural backgrounds. Indeed, to what extent these cultures are reducible to an 'Other' from the view of these musicians is debatable. The problem here might be that such musical appropriation and mixing, while certainly that of somewhat privileged Western musicians[580], appear like very positive, not so much image-oriented practices – again more about becoming (in the context of a globalized

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[575] This goes for race and ethnicity in these scenes in general: while the overwhelming majority of protagonists in these scenes appears to be white, further research will have to be done. cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 104–105.
[576] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (January 11, 2013).
[577] cf. Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 84.
[578] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 123–124.
[579] Also see Currin, Grayson / Masters, Marc: III. Eric Carbonara: Stripping things away, in: The Out Door: In the Blink of an Eye. *Pitchfork*. http://pitchfork.com/features/the-out-door/7949-the-out-door-12/3/. Last accessed: January 26, 2013.
[580] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 98–116.

society, not least) than being or appearance. But again, these are just early guesses, and these topics deserve a more thorough investigation.

Third: the natural persona. Many of the musics discussed here can easily be connected to natural tropes; see Martin Büsser's comments on "*Naturmystizismus*", for example, or the Jewelled Antler Collective's practice, to name just two examples from different levels. Interviewee Matt Valentine and his partner Erika Elder are most excellent examples of musicians in whose case a DIY approach encompasses life outside of music, explicitly involving nature, or at least (not necessarily idyllic) life in the countryside: "I dig the silence and the nature scene", David Keenan quotes Valentine. "That in itself is a major influence... helps me hear the intervals better. But the reality is that you actually have to deal with people a lot more."[581]

Valentine never hides the importance of modern technology in his interview. Instead, various technologies, from reel-to-reel tapes already handled in childhood[582] to CD-Rs used as a primary medium in recent years, are present. Valentine and Elder *do* live in the country, praise its benefits and use terms from agricultural language; but when Valentine talks about their practice enabling the breaking down of borders, that happens "by just doing the label, in house, because we answer the mail, we answer (laughs) the MySpace directly"[583]. (It is worth noting – another intriguing historical aspect – that at the time I conducted the interviews, MySpace was still relatively important as a social network and node in such virtual music webs.)

As quoted earlier, rural life has aesthetic and social benefits and challenges. In addition to these factors,

> by living up here we're able to keep our expenses sort of at a minimum, so it enables us to do that whereas, and that's a choice that we've made, we've made a lot of sacrifices in our own lives (MS: Yeah) to be able to do that, but I think, you know, the point is is you *can* make the sacrifice, you *can* do it a different way than like go to college, get a piece of paper that says you have to do something, for the rest, and then, get up, make the toast, drive to the same place every day, have two children, nicely cut lawn, you don't have to do that, there are other ways, you know, and that's what we're, the more that we do it that way, the more we meet other people who do it that way[584]

[581] Matt Valentine, quoted in Keenan, David: Medicine heads, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 275 (January 2007), 31.
[582] Also see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 100–101, where this is brought up in the context of an investigation of musician's early lives.
[583] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[584] Ibid.

Here, a certain (counter-)discipline opens up new paths, quite far from the countercultural laziness described by Zimmerman – and eager to attain sustainability. Valentine is interested in individual, identifiable sounds or styles. Having used a nature-oriented analogy (the breeding of dogs for domestic purposes and those dogs' distance to the wolf), he goes on to explain that

> what is accepted in music these days is usually more homogenized than, it's, what's closer to the real source, the origin of sound, I mean, when you get really into farthest reaches of experimental music, […] usually it's more primitive sounding and even, in the rock scene, folk scene, it's a more primitive, highly identifiable sound, if someone's on it, […] it's beautiful when you hear certain musicians and you can instantly recognize who they are (MS: Yeah) and maybe even see the obvious lineage and maybe the not so obvious[585]

Here, the contaminated essentialism and, arguably, Deleuzian becoming-animal described by Büsser meets an interest in the construction and use of music's history[586] as well as Diederichsen's remarks on free improvisers' quest for humanist "*Ur-Musikalität*" or a yet-to-be-invented "*post-musikalisch[e] Musikalität*"[587]. However, Diederichsen doesn't even necessarily see this as the hordes' main interest – what is relevant here is rather the accumulation of practice and its constant (social) challenge.[588]

Every now and then, the Grateful Dead's influence will factor into these scenes. Matt Valentine says that he

> was more into more progressive things because to me, it really did define a mindset, progressive thinking, and what a concept, these were like progressive ideas, even though some of the music I wasn't really super into, like the *bloat* of progressive rock, the more organic commune progressive nature of things, I was really into all of those, ideals, Can, Amon Düül, two camps there, Siloah, you know, in America, The Grateful Dead, all these things like that were kinda, Rusties, that's what you call the Neil fans, Rusties (both laugh), in my upbringing, these were things that were, there were no boundaries there[589]

Interest in the Grateful Dead can be directed just as much at the band's fans as at the band itself. The Deadhead phenomenon[590] of fans following the band, and its "emphasis on community – a sense of togetherness defined against the mainstream"[591] play into this. It involved an anti-commercialism nonetheless connected to busy commercial activities surrounding concerts, the specific ethics and interests of audience / bootleg

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585 Ibid.
586 cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 140.
587 Diederichsen: Die Horde als sozialmusikalische Aufgabe, 251.
588 cf. ibid., 254.
589 Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
590 cf. Reynolds: *Retromania*, 229–233. Reynolds discusses Deadheads in terms of the past's preservation.
591 Ibid., 231.

recording[592] and the "flickering multitude"[593] of the audience at such concerts. It is, once again, time to return to Diedrich Diederichsen's take on the New Weird America. Diederichsen suggests that, for example, Animal Collective are more interested in the "*musikalischen Symptom[e]*"[594] of such lifestyles and their simulation rather than the actual authentic living of such lives. Diederichsen (in 2005 and thus at a time when groups generally still seemed more present in the musical underground) suggests that the lack of collectivity in the music world inspires both the rediscovery of the *Horde* in one's own (artistic-social) life or as a part-time method.[595] Paul Hegarty, meanwhile, contrasts the "organic, harmonious" community of Grateful Dead fans to the "threatening one" that was "summoned" by groups like MC5, The Stooges and The Velvet Underground, "where we can all blur into each other but in so doing, we can assert our agency in the world."[596]

Zimmerman's discussion of the Greateful Dead's use of improvisation offers an interesting platform on which to let such techniques (re-)enter the picture. Zimmerman suggests that "the experimental jazz signifiers of the post-1967 culture revealed a more covert engagement with nature" than the "folk music sounds and lyrical descriptions of the outdoors"[597] in earlier countercultural musics had. Also, soon after having established Sun Ra's influence on these musicians, she writes that "[t]he counterculture's technology was strangely similar to the space race technology in what it seemed to represent – a tool for a masculinist thrust into uncharted natural territory."[598] In addition to pointing out via Diederichsen's considerations in chapter 3.3 that often enough, improvisations in these scenes don't appear to necessarily carry any specific type of 'thrust', I want to suggest that, in this thesis's context, a discussion of improvisation informed by Bruce Russell's writings might be more useful and adequate to this thesis for an overall coming-to-terms with some themes hinted at in Zimmerman's book than a direct engagement. I will be taking a different path that is actually available to me and that, in combination with the following elaborations on psychedelia and capitalism, will at least imply an interesting and useful comparison of

[592] For a connection to MV & EE, also see Donaldson, Jonathan: Going off-off-road with MV & EE. Rural Rock, in: *The Phoenix*. Features (August 15, 2012). http://thephoenix.com/boston/music/142819-going-off-off-road-with-mv-andamp-ee/. Last accessed: January 29, 2013.
[593] Reynolds: *Retromania*, 232.
[594] Diederichsen: Rückkehr zum Kollektiv.
[595] cf. ibid.
[596] Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, 68.
[597] Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 115.
[598] Ibid., 116.

(my perception and analysis of) these scenes and (Zimmerman's perception and analysis of) the San Francisco counterculture. As an introduction, I want to once again quote Branden W. Joseph:

> Rather than obscuring or avoiding a political project (a charge, for instance, routinely advance about Cage's relationship to dada), what Cage put on the table was precisely the connection or articulation of politics and form. For the generation coming of age with Cage in their sights, a certain relation was thereby posed between aesthetics and politics – an understanding that an aesthetic is, in some way and without mediation, equal to a politics or to a political position or model.[599]

Following his discussion of psychedelia, I asked Eric Arn about ideas of freedom in these musics. His reply ties in with this thesis's themes:

> Well, I think that's directly tied to the idea of improvisation, which is very much tied to these ideas because improvisation means, if you, I mean, there's plenty of bad improvised music out there, it's not a magic ticket to anything, […] when you've memorized something and repeated it so many times, it takes a different part of your mind to do it than if you're *in* the moment and forced to pay close attention and create your response to what's happening in that second as it happens[600]

Arn once again relates this "to these ideas of abstraction, transcendence, psychedelic states of mind"[601]. As Jeremy Gilbert writes,

> one of the aims of New Left cultural studies was always to find ways to explore the territory between the implicitly progressive elements of popular culture and the explicit political projects of the socialist, feminist and other movements.[602]

This chapter's, even this thesis's further elaborations will hopefully help map this territory to some extent, possibly even helping pave the way towards certain types of alliance that Gilbert's book desires.

Bruce Russell is a member of The Dead C and A Handful of Dust and thus the New Zealand scene already mentioned in subchapter 3.2. He has written numerous texts on the political potentials of free music that have been collected in the volume *Left-handed blows*[603]. I will refer to a few of these texts here. In "What is free? A free noise manifesto"[604] (1994[605]), he includes a very short historical contextualization or tracing

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[599] Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 85.
[600] Interview with Eric Arn (Vienna, June 21, 2009).
[601] Ibid.
[602] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 99.
[603] Russell, Bruce: *Left-handed blows. Writing on sound 1993–2009* (Auckland 2009).
[604] Russell, Bruce: What is free? A free noise manifesto, in: *Left-handed blows*, 21–24.

of the development of free music and free noise. In the text, one can find once again the idea of improvised, or – here – 'free' music being a "primal musical gesture"[606] – in Russell's words, "a part of traditional folk forms". According to Russell, this aspect posits free music so as to hinder its acceptance into "the corpus of academic classical music, since the rules of that form do not admit of its existence."[607] Classical music is, however, able to imitate the free, whereas "free music uses noise purely because it is the basic unit of all musics."[608] Russell's thought here also influenced interviewee David Keenan's:

> Bruce's articulating of the idea that music was a sub-set of noise inspired a whole lot of my own ideas about rock and pop and its relationship to noise and rarely has anyone combined academic/hermetic rigour with punk rock smarts quite so daffily.[609]

Russell's text accords a pioneering role to free jazz while suggesting free music is not necessarily / inherently related to jazz. It is interesting here to contrast Zimmerman's assertion that "[i]n the sixties, improvisational rock and experimental jazz were genres linked by critics, promoters, musicians, and the media as symbiotic in their chaotic nature"[610] with Russell's idea that "[f]rom the fringes of jazz, free moved into rock music by a process of osmosis."[611] Rather than The Grateful Dead, the foremost encounter here is The Velvet Underground and with them, the Theatre of Eternal Music. The ESP Disk label was an important predecessor of the scenes discussed by this thesis – not necessarily an equivalent, a Siltbreeze, Eclipse or Not Not Fun of the 1960s, but a necessary touchstone. Jeanette Leech writes that "ESP-Disk was radical, it was diverse, and it was counter-cultural"[612], Büsser explicitly mentions the label in his introduction to free folk[613], and Russell too invokes the "'meeting' between jazz, rock, classical and folk musics" that the label's roster was a prime example of. Somewhat similarly to Keenan's conceptualization of underground music history, "[m]arket forces and the

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[605] cf. BANANAFISH #9 w/EP Harry Pussy GATE Bill Smog SOLMANIA+. Auction details, in: *popsike.com*. rare records auction results. http://www.popsike.com/BANANAFISH-9-wEP-Harry-Pussy-GATE-Bill-Smog-SOLMANIA/350272849333.html. Last accessed: January 26, 2013.
[606] Keenan: The Fire Down Below, 34; cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 173–174.
[607] Russell: What is free?, 21.
[608] Ibid., 22.
[609] Keenan, David: Bruce Russell. Left-Handed Blows: Writing On Sound 1993-2009, in: *VOLCANIC TONGUE UPDATE 11 APRIL 2010* (email newsletter). This could be contrasted to Paul Hegarty's reading of "constantly dissipat[ing]" noise, where "what is judged noise at one point is music or meaning at another." (Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, ix.)
[610] Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 114.
[611] Russell: What is free?, 22.
[612] Leech: *Seasons They Change*, 58.
[613] cf. Büsser: Free Folk.

growing power of international music production/publication cartel interests combined to stunt the mass effect of this unique historical moment."[614]

The free "mirrors reality", whereas through "structured musics", "human subjectivity" tries in vain "to impose itself on the blind flood of facticity."[615] It is obvious that for Russell, in the early 1990s as in the late 2000s, the Cagean articulation of politics and form is of great relevance. Playing free music thus constitutes an escape from unsound categorizations. In Russell's free music, technology is not hidden or naturalized so as to create the image of a more natural music. Instead, technology (as contingent: broken technology can be useful too in Russell's thought) is seen as very much a part of the free musician's arsenal of tools. Here, a certain reconnection to the question of rock-centric histories of the scenes I am discussing can be performed:

> Free music which utilises rock instrumentation and aesthetics as its jumping-off point can harness a noise more purely random and less limited by subjective considerations than that of any but the most determined acoustic musicians.[616]

Electricity and its contingencies enable a variety of surprises – and the use of a particularly wide spectrum of frequencies.[617] I feel it would be hard to accuse musicians in the scenes I am discussing of the naturalization of technology that Zimmerman detects in the San Francisco counterculture; while varying in terms of tech-savviness they tend to be aware of its very benefits and don't necessarily hide that, despite the often (but not always) nature-referencing imagery. Sometimes the musicians possibly most associated with 'natural', rural lifestyles (and with the Grateful Dead) can be particularly open about their interest in technologies as seen earlier in Matt Valentine's case. But on the other hand, I might be building a straw man out of the natural persona as described by Zimmerman: indeed, Zimmerman doesn't claim that the masking of technology was an easy, linear thing to do, but understands it in its complexity. Yes, it does make sense to delineate tendencies towards the naturalizing (and gendered) cliché here[618]. Maybe here, too, "a congeries of natural signifiers"[619] (and exotic ones) is consumed in album covers, band names (Animal Collective, Axolotl, Barn Owl, Black Forest / Black Sea, Thuja, Wolf Eyes – but note the differences in sound / context!) et

[614] Russell: What is free?, 23.
[615] Ibid. It would be interesting to contrast this in greater detail with Deleuze and Guattari's observations on the 'molar' and the 'molecular' (cf. for example Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 229–255).
[616] Russell: What is free?, 24.
[617] See Hegarty: *Noise/Music*, 57–74 for an interesting discussion of the electric in music / noise, involving bands important to these scenes (the Grateful Dead, The Velvet Underground, Neu!, Faust…).
[618] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 176–178; Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 105–113.
[619] Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 95.

cetera, but is there anything that truly needs to be masked now, especially considering 1. the vast difference in levels of commercial success between these underground bands and, for example, the Grateful Dead, and 2. the somewhat different workings of capitalism nowadays? If nature was "the key to making [the] distinction"[620] between the counterculture's and the mainstream's respective (and similarly consumerist) notions of freedom, but in these contemporary scenes at least, the distinction is not simply localized in the natural, although it may play a role there in some artists' cases – and again, even artists known for living in the country don't necessarily consider their surroundings utopian.

A take on free music different to Russell's can be encountered in Jeremy Gilbert's text "Becoming-Music: The Rhizomatic Moment of Improvisation". In *Gender construction*, its (at least to me) most prominent appearance served the attempted grasping of certain technological-social-artistic developments' contribution to simultaneous, indivisible questioning or even subversion of dominant forms of authorship and gender through the "massed voices" and "vocal magic"[621] employed by artists such as, for example, Grouper, Inca Ore or The Skaters.[622] I have already alluded to this topic in chapter 3.3. However, Gilbert's text presents a wider variety of aspects pertaining to its general topic – which Gilbert himself, at the end of his text, identifies as 'improvisationality'.

> All musics possess an improvisational dimension, which is to say a rhizomatic moment at which connections are made between musics, subjects, and non-musical machines and at which a certain opening onto a 'cosmic' space of infinite possibility occurs: a moment of the musician-composer's becoming music. However, some forms of music-making, and some examples of those forms, would seem to foreground this moment more than others, enabling it to proliferate and self-multiply without collapsing into a mere chaos of white noise, […][623]

Improvised musics hold certain potentials that "more stratified musics, locked into a logic of intention and signification"[624] don't. It appears almost too easy to point out that the musics Gilbert writes of are mostly quite obvious (though not necessarily linear) influences on many of the artists interviewed for and mentioned in my theses. Examples include Miles Davis, Can and La Monte Young. I want to point out some key aspects of Gilbert's text before then returning to further texts by Russell.

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[620] Ibid., 93.
[621] Keenan: Both Sides = Now.
[622] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 126–129.
[623] Gilbert: Becoming-Music, 135.
[624] Ibid.

Gilbert praises Miles Davis albums like *Bitches' Brew* and *On The Corner* for their fluidity, democratic creation, genre-defying "opening up [of] a new musical assemblage, a new field of cross-generic techno-sonic possibilities"[625] and, indeed, considers them rhizomatic. Here, too, not least through the employment of studio technology, authorship gets further dismantled. Rather than supporting romantic notions of how music and its subjects are conceived, improvisation counters such notions through "a process at once mysterious and thoroughly material"[626] as well as social. The blurring of boundaries that Gilbert recognizes here can also be seen as emancipatory by musicians. Discussing how women are discouraged to take to the stage by gendered expectations (a barrier that she thinks has been overcome more and more), Eva Saelens says that

> a lot of people just have preconceptions about the stage and stuff too, which are so silly but, especially as we, so many more people become musicians, the line between the crowd and the stage becomes blurred, and to me that's like nirvana, that's like the highest h-, that's like heaven, if we're all musicians *and* all audience, then we've truly come to a higher level of humanity, higher level of consciousness when so many people can consider themselves a vital part of art[627]

One of the essay's most intriguing moments is Gilbert's suggestion that "the complexity and indeterminacy of improvised musics produce a proliferation of affects, none of which operates according to the law of lack, deferral and simple gratification."[628] Ultimately, in improvised musics, a "becoming-music"[629] can take place in which "The Ecstasy of Complexity"[630] – not to be understood as a necessarily virtuosic complexity – peaks and (for example gendered) categorizations are dissolved. Finally, via Lyotard, Gilbert argues that musics such as the ones discussed in his text (singling out La Monte Young due to Deleuze and Guattari's mention of his music) could be considered 'postmodern' as it manages to "ope[n] onto the cosmos", whereas modernism "posits the sublime/cosmic as lack". Such postmodern musics propose that these "dimensions of experience […] can be actively accessed and positively produced, even if they cannot

[625] Ibid., 122–123.
[626] Ibid., 124. I would argue that not all players involved in the musics I am discussing here necessarily "refus[e] […] ideologies of spontaneous purity" (ibid.), but I don't think this impedes their musics' 'improvisationality'. Rather, the process complicates the ideology… or maybe the ideology, here, is expanded, and this purity might best be seen in the context of the contaminated essentialism that Büsser claims is at work in these musical-social fields.
[627] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[628] Gilbert: Becoming-Music, 125.
[629] Ibid., 126.
[630] Ibid., 122: the title for one of the article's sections.

be signified."[631] Indeed, one possible line of thought apt for this thesis might be that if the "formal innovations"[632] of modernism aren't in meaningful opposition to capitalist realism (any more), constantly precorporated[633], maybe emancipatory potential will have to be sought in the aspects Gilbert describes here.

In 1993, Russell had published a text called "Contra-Fludd/contra-Kepler". It serves as a manifesto for an aesthetics of immanence and an attack on a conception of sounds according to a 'harmony of the spheres' or 'music of the spheres' (which the article's subtitle counters with the notion of a "disharmony of the spheres"[634]). It is, thus, somewhat reminiscent of Tony Conrad's criticism[635] of similar concepts. Crucially, for Russell, the denial of such an essential and normative harmony is an affirmation of musical freedom: "Overturning the tutelage of [God] the Master Musician frees humanity to make music no longer celestial but human. The locus of human music is grounded in the human subject, not surrendered to a metaphysical abstract."[636] This frees music from measuring itself according to any (seemingly natural) rules – analogous to Keenan's interest in 'illegitimate' musics. One of Russell's footnotes to "Contra-Fludd/Contra-Kepler" – referring to the quote above – states a subject- / self-oriented materialism particularly clearly:

> In this sense the making of human music – free music – becomes a 'revolutionary' exercise. It is a skirmish in the war against human self-alienation, a recapturing from the 'metaphysical' realm of attributes and activities more properly reserved to humanity itself. To decide for oneself not only the sort of music to be made, but also the rules according to which this music is to be both made and actually defined, is a radical act of self-determination. It is a leap into the realm of freedom.[637]

Through such free music, empowerment takes place according to Russell. The DIY scenes I write about serve no greater category according to which they are measured. While these texts offer basic manifesto-like thoughts and, through footnotes, a variety of tools for their understanding, it is in the more recently written introduction[638] to his essay collection that Russell's musical-political project becomes clearest.

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[631] Ibid., 136.
[632] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 8.
[633] cf. ibid., 8–9.
[634] Russell: Contra-Fludd/contra-Kepler, 29.
[635] cf. Joseph: *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 46, 150–151.
[636] Russell: Contra-Fludd/contra-Kepler, 31.
[637] Ibid., footnote 12.
[638] Russell, Bruce: Left-handed blows. Towards a technique of incognito, in: *Left-handed blows*, 1–17.

Russell's approach is dialectical. Describing improvised sound work (as he calls his artistic practice), Russell writes that he "regard[s] it as art because it is an attempt to understand human reality without either describing or analysing it", and thus, art is "an attempt to map the process of integration of the subject and object in history."[639] He considers improvised sound work "inherently self-critical"[640]. Inherent as this self-criticality is, it is not the more explicit (self-)reflection I encouraged in *Gender construction*[641] – Russell's text itself, however, would be one form of that. Here, the improvisational aspect is again comparable to Eric Arn's comments. Russell refers to numerous theorists in his text, including Walter Benjamin, Georg Lukács and, most notably, Guy Debord. He builds on these theorists' work, especially a situationist set of tools, not least the 'constructed situation'. "It represented a negation of the 'totality' of the spectacle[642]." To "challeng[e]" "the ruling relations of production and their ideas", situationists propose "the re-invention of life outside the rules unilaterally laid down by the spectacle."[643] Russell's improvised sound work is practiced in ways analogous to such theory. He goes on to discuss

> the modes of engagement characteristic of improvised sound work. These include explorations of structure, sound, duration, and subjective perception as well as the practices of the 'collaborative potlatch', experimentation with alternative performance-experiences, and the radical rejection of the cult of the composer, the 'rules' of music and the hierarchical models of composition, score-reading and conduction.[644]

All of these can in varying ways and to varying extents also be encountered in or applied to the work of many of the artists I have interviewed and written about. Here, in addition to the already established connections of influence, interest, shared labels et cetera between Russell (and The Dead C, and other peers of his from New Zealand) and the musical-social fields I am discussing, more specific aesthetic and practical connections or at least analogies can be traced and pointed out. (It is of import to add here that Russell himself doesn't necessarily *think* about such topics while performing, thus problematizing the relation between theory and practice; and that artists' own acknowledgement isn't needed for Russell's affirmation of their participation in such

[639] Ibid., 3.
[640] Ibid., 4.
[641] cf. for example Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 203–205.
[642] The spectacle is considered, to quote Gilbert, "the accumulation of images which characterises the sensory environment of advanced capitalist societies and which in some senses constitutes the alienated reality of those societies, rendering all life within them a process of passive contemplation." (Gilbert: Anticapitalism and Culture, 110.)
[643] Russell: Left-handed blows, 10.
[644] Ibid., 11.

critical activities.[645]) Just one example: crucially, Russell links the practice of midwest noise bands like Wolf Eyes[646] to the "spatial considerations of the dérive"[647], referring to the many unusual or non-professional venues such artists often play in – an aspect already important to my *Gender construction* thesis, in which I elaborated on DIY / everyday life venues' use in these scenes.[648]

> Being outside of the so-called 'music industry' which purveys alienated entertainment products that "joyously express their slave sentiments", sound work can create, for brief periods of time, 'constructed situations', where 'unitary ambiences of sound, *mise en scène*, and selected audiences of initiated *enfants perdus* can briefly combine to 'foreshadow' "a few aspects of a provisional microsociety".[649]

Hardly anywhere in his 'free folk'-compatible writings are the political and even utopian aspects of Russell's writings made as explicit in their articulation to musicians' practice (indeed, a "critical praxis"[650]) as here.

Jeremy Gilbert's *Anticapitalism and Culture* includes a useful critique of situationism[651] that will enable me to take further steps in this thesis's elaboration. Gilbert engages with the situationist view according to which

> capitalism is characterised by its tendency to separate people from each other and from the products of their labour, and to mask social relationships by giving objects and institutions (from commodities to the institutions of the state) the appearance of real things with a life and agency of their own.[652]

He considers this "a valid observation about the social dynamic of capitalism" but criticizes the implied totality of capitalism conceived that way. According to Gilbert, this only leaves "fleeting and momentary or entirely isolated forms of resistance" as tactics to appreciate while judging "some future moment of full-scale proletarian revolution as the only possible source of permanent change."[653] Gilbert argues that the

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[645] cf. ibid., 1–2, 16–17..
[646] Russell specifically refers to comments in Alan Licht's Wire cover story on Wolf Eyes, cf. Licht, Alan: Call of the Wild, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 249 (November 2004), 38–45. The reference is found in Russell: Left-handed blows, 13, footnote 41.
[647] Russell: Left-handed blows, 13.
[648] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 150–153.
[649] Russell: Left-handed blows, 13. Russell lists the two quotations in this paragraph as having been taken from Walter Benjamin's *Reflections: essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings* (New York 1978), pages 33 and 29, respectively.
[650] Russell: Left-handed blows, 11.
[651] cf. Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 99–103.
[652] Ibid., 101.
[653] Ibid.

building of coalitions – in full awareness of how these can't attain an ideal of political homogeneity – is necessary for the manifestation of actual political alternatives. While he appreciates inventive tactics like those harnessed by the situationists and their followers, he argues for their assemblage into strategies. This complexity-aware approach is, as other parts of his book show, very much informed by Gilbert's experience and following of activist politics, and it is to be considered in the framework of the collectivity-oriented, enthusiastic politics that Gilbert endorses. Russell's improvised sound work, "a form of activity not predicated on separation"[654], is of that type of activity that Gilbert appreciates, even endorses, but sees at its most potent if it is included in a greater strategy.

However, this is one of those moments where the tracing needs to be put back on the map. After all, what is at stake here? As Russell is well aware, these artists don't necessarily consider their 'improvised sound work' in his, or any other explicitly political-theoretical, terms. His is just one particular perspective from which he proposes modes of theorizing these DIY music / improvised sound work activities. It is a valid perspective and certainly one that will rigorously defend its own validity. It is also an important perspective that helps make such musics / improvised sound work connectible to activities and thoughts beyond the sonic and immediately affective. However, it cannot necessarily speak for the improvised sound workers whose practice it elaborates. Similarly, Gilbert's notion of improvisationality and of the rhizomatic aspects of improvised music isn't necessarily compatible with musicians' own conception of their practice.[655] All such observations, if carried out carefully and in awareness of their contingency, are valid, but such discrepancies must be kept in mind and should ideally be faced directly at some point, at least in more complex future texts. But the main discrepancy to tackle here probably manifests in the application of Gilbert's thoughts in *Anticapitalism and Culture* to Russell's theses and to the field of research in general. This application is certainly valid, and I hope it is useful, traceable and connectable, designed as it is to open up new paths for research and analysis, potentially resulting in interesting ideas. I believe it is intellectually sound: there is no reason why a text that, in the end, discusses the articulation of culture and politics (and theory) shouldn't be applied to a culturally-socially defined field. And yet, there is a strange gap between these scenes not necessarily being 'about' political activism, often

[654] Russell: Left-handed blows, 17.
[655] See, for example, Spencer Clark's example in my first thesis. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 157–158.

even largely eschewing it (see chapter 5.2 for more on this) on the one hand and Gilbert's interest in radical political activism on the other.

Sometimes such a gap is bridged at least mentally. As Glenn Donaldson says of the Jewelled Antler Collective,

> we're not changing the world, we're just wanting to make our own little niche, musically and aesthetically, and so, meeting up with them, creating that label, making tons of CD-Rs, exploring all these different kinds of music I'd been interested in for years and just having the freedom to put out records without record labels and without a lot of money, and just also being around people who are generally, don't care about genres or having a career in indie rock, or rock and, just doing it for its own sake, which appealed to me[656]

He goes on to talk about *Maximumrocknroll*,

> a very strong left-wing magazine, it's like, you should never make money, you know (laughs), don't make money, don't sell out, that's what I grew up on, so, I've always felt Jewelled Antler was an extension of that […]"[657]

'Selling out' is not merely a danger to any internal quality of music, however conceived; it is a part of a broader ("very strong left-wing") ethics. Jewelled Antler might not be changing the world, but politics haven't been entirely disarticulated[658] from music here. As Gilbert is aware[659], strategies have often made creative practice impossible – in a sense, thus, political strategies might be opposed to the creative autonomy so valued by Russell, Keenan and many others in these scenes. But at the same time, such music scenes' ideas and self-conceptualizations aren't entirely free of political thought. Awareness that the autonomy or freedom or creativity so cherished in these scenes must be sought for in a larger societal context can support, I think, the claim that it is a valid proposition to think of these musics in strategic-political terms.

Unlike what is discussed in Zimmerman's chapter on the New Age persona, fully dropping out doesn't appear to be much of an option available to the musicians in this particular scene – or does it? Maybe musicians like Matt Valentine and Erika Elder come relatively close, but even in their case, the freedom sought is a relative one that will not pretend to be entirely disconnected from mainstream society. One relatively prominent aspect featured in *Gender construction* was the tendency of musicians to, at

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[656] Interview with Glenn Donaldson (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[657] Ibid.
[658] See, for example, Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 10, and the rest of the book for closer elaboration.
[659] cf. Gilbert: Anticapitalism and Culture, 223.

times, live together in buildings / building complexes like the Fishtown Compound[660], a tendency that in some cases was based on explicitly political motives (see chapter 5.2). In any case, most musicians in these scenes have jobs (and if not, usually only for short times) and would never be able to present themselves as entirely detached from the "traditional society of work."[661]

One of Zimmerman's most important and resonating criticisms of the San Francisco counterculture refers to its gender politics, to the utterly non-egalitarian implications of 'free love'. While the scenes I have been discussing don't seem to offer much in the way of new gender models, overt performative disturbances of gender or conscious tackling of gender questions, neither are they particularly rigid – in fact, I observed a great openness in *Gender construction*[662], a relative decline of quasi-archaic elements of rock misogyny, a certain accessability in a riot grrrl-influenced DIY world, although certain rigidities remain. But even though sexuality might often be implied in the musics at hand, the element of 'free love' appears much less present here than in the San Francisco counterculture. However, the psychedelic-spiritual axis remains not necessarily in place but is quite (contingently) traceable in these circles.[663] Reminiscing about the American Indian Science class that he and Jon Porras, his bandmate in Barn Owl, attended, Evan Caminiti says that

> the things we talked about in that class [I think in] a lot of ways apply to our music, in a way of this, being, having a sort of… nature worshipping, sort of thing, almost, in a way it sounds cheesy, but you know, a sort of paganistic ode to being in the natural world, which I think living here you appreciate more, getting out of the city and, being in a place of quiet and solitude[664]

However, in a recent email, Caminiti writes that "I'm in such a different place now in terms of the music I'm making and why I do it. I almost never get out of the city or do anything in regards to that pagan vibe, I'm fully a person of the city now."[665] Personal approaches to music change over the years, inspirations shift, as do outlooks on one's life and work. They aren't immutably inscribed in, let alone essential to, one's work.

Discussing questions of race and ethnicity in these fields, Evan Caminiti speculates that "I mean, maybe in a lot of ways it's white Americans trying to reconnect with a spiritual void that they feel in their culture", having "that need for some deeper level of personal,

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[660] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 131–132, 150–153.
[661] Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 25.
[662] See Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 189–205, for a summary.
[663] Also see, for example, ibid., 174–175.
[664] Interview with Evan Caminiti (San Francisco, July 22, 2009).
[665] Personal email correspondence with Evan Caminiti (January 15, 2013).

spiritual enlightenment or connection to something greater than yourself". He adds, talking of "the transcendent powers of drone":

> hearing drones has such a deep effect on me now, maybe on the most basic level, it releases serotonin in my brain, or something, but then on another level of enabling you to slip into an alternate state of consciousness, in a trance state, where your perception is completely altered… I think… yeah, our moment in time, and place has led this group of people to kind of pursue these more esoteric paths of, some sort of personal enlightenment, maybe[666]

One quote used in my first thesis[667] that I want to reappropriate here is his Eric Arn's definition of psychedelia as "the idea of a different state of mind, right, however it's induced (laughs), and what the potential of it is, and […] how that can improve a person's life or outlook or, and through them, society in general or who knows what else (laughs)". Here, micropolitics are already implied, and Arn, talking about his musical and geographic trajectory, differentiates between cities like Austin and San Francisco that "have a long history of psychedelia" and cities in which such a history's manifestations were less apparent in artistic discussion, like Los Angeles and Boston. Arn situates them spatially (in terms of what that meant for his artistic practice in these cities) and temporally (in terms of his own "evolution"[668]). Discussing the problematic status of genre terms like 'free folk' or, specifically, noise and their application to his own work (which he says sounds "blown out and loud and confused"), Spencer Clark argues that

> It's all like psychedelic, I think, all the people like in America probably did drugs and listened to weird music and were like, "I wanna do that eventually", and you're reexperiencing taking drugs by doing music, or I don't even know if people will do that, but I think that that's a possibility, like it's psychedelic music[669]

The expansion or at least changing of minds has already been encountered in this thesis and here, a few more words shall be added. How can such mind expansion be conceptualized? Take this quote from Manuel De Landa:

> When you trip, you liquefy structures in your brain, linguistic structures, intentional structures. They acquire a less viscous consistency, and your brain becomes a super-computer. You are able to think concepts you were not able to think before. Information rushes in your brain, which

[666] Interview with Evan Caminiti (San Francisco, July 22, 2009).
[667] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 139.
[668] Interview with Eric Arn (Vienna, June 21, 2009).
[669] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009). While not quoted, this was already referred to in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 172.

> makes you feel like you're having a revelation. But of course no one is revealing anything to you. It's just self-organizing. It's happening by itself.[670]

De Landa's Deleuze-inspired take on the psychedelic experience is explicitly materialist. The liquid state is situated between solid and gaseous states. While the former can be "too rigid" and the latter "too loose"[671], even tending towards the type of suicide Deleuze and Guattari warn of, the liquid state avoids either extreme.[672] Deleuze and Guattari themselves discuss drugs in that section[673] of A Thousand Plateaus that is most focused on becoming, its various forms and aspects. "All drugs fundamentally concern speeds, and modifications of speed." Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize drugs' impact according to "a line of perceptive causality that makes it so that (1) the imperceptible is perceived; (2) perception is molecular; (3) desire directly invests the perception and the perceived."[674] But they do not trust drugs: deterritorializations achieved through drug use may be paid for with terrible reterritorializations. Drug addicts, they suggest, can be understood as "precursors or experimenters", but what Deleuze and Guattari really advocate is

> [t]o reach the point where "to get high or not to get high" is no longer the question, but rather whether drugs have sufficiently changed the general conditions of space and time perception so that nonusers can succeed in passing through the holes in the world and following the lines of flight at the very place where means other than drugs become necessary.[675]

So drugs, psychedelic or otherwise, are means to an end – or not to an end but to a becoming. One band whose (sometimes) explicitly political and psychedelic take on experimental music was mentioned by interviewees and discussed in a short section[676] of *Gender construction* were Yellow Swans. The group itself isn't active any more but played an important role to the psychedelic / noise underground in the USA. In my first thesis, I cited this quote by one of Yellow Swans' two members, Gabriel Saloman, that appeared in a *Wire* feature on the band and explains the title of their then-recent *Psychic Secession* album:

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[670] Manuel De Landa, quoted in Davis, Erik: DeLanda Destratified. Observing the Liquefaction of Manuel DeLanda. http://www.techgnosis.com/delandad.html. Last accessed: January 20, 2013.
[671] De Landa, quoted in Davis: DeLanda Destratified.
[672] cf. De Landa, quoted in DeLanda Destratified.
[673] This is the endlessly fascinating plateau "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" in Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 256–341. The discussion of drugs is found on pages 311–316.
[674] Ibid., 311.
[675] Ibid., 315.
[676] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 187–188.

> My feeling is that to establish a real world, working social democracy, where people are granted actual autonomy, each individual must first go through a process of self-liberation. In order to achieve that, they can't simply break rules, or create new variations of them. They have to literally change their mind, and in so doing, begin conceiving of relationships with themselves and others that have no pre-existing structure. From this place of limitless possibility, they can begin to manifest a world that actually functions according to constant and positive change.[677]

I then added another paragraph of short considerations on this subject, quite in line with some of this new thesis's preoccupations. I pointed out the "quasi-individualist element"[678] inherent to Saloman's ideas, but also their embedding in decidedly social networks of mutual support through DIY activities. Saloman further elaborates on the concept of Psychedelic Anarchism[679], of which psychic secession is an aspect, in a foundational post for a proposed online communiqué. He explains that Psychedelic anarchism

> attempts to integrate my interest in metaphysics with my anarchist principles and to harmonize the often dissonant aspects of those cultures. I call it Psychedelic Anarchism, using psychedelic's original definition of "mind manifesting", and referring to Anarchism in the cultural and philosophical sense more than in a Syndicalist conception.[680]

Saloman finds anarchism's exclusion of "Spirituality and Magick" historically well-explicable but detrimental to a visionary, creative engagement with societal politics, in addition to its inherent division "between the lives of 'First World' activists and Aboriginal peoples and communities who have not been stripped of their imminent and cultural relationships with the Spirit world, Nature, and Magick." At the same time, he proposes a critique of the ways that much "autonomous spiritual exploration" has failed to self-reflectively challenge "structural hierarchies, sexism, racism, classism and privilege, or gross consumerism and capitalist tendencies". Saloman singles out "the realm of Art and aesthetics"[681] as one that offers opportunities for such convergences and interactions.

Saloman's approach and background are obviously deeply and seriously emancipatory, and here, he articulates a variety of elements that can be encountered elsewhere in these scenes, although usually not as overtly politicized. Quite a few of his ideas presented

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[677] Gabriel Saloman, quoted in Dale, Jon: A joyful noise, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 268 (June 2006), 27.
[678] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 188.
[679] Writing about Yellow Swans in *Gender construction*, some lapse in concentration led to me repeatedly referring to this concept as "Psychic Anarchism" (Ibid., 188).
[680] Saloman, Gabriel: Promethean Paper. An introduction to Psychedelic Anarchism, and an invitation to Promethean Paper: an Exoteric Journal of Magick, Art, & Activism, in: The Script and Seal. http://psychaparty.wordpress.com/promethean-papers/. Last accessed: January 19, 2013.
[681] Ibid.

here ring true: remember the 'possible worlds' as well as Tony Conrad's and Throbbing Gristle's early engagement with power of the control type as woven into this thesis in chapter 3.3. While I don't want to dismiss Saloman's views on spirituality out of hand (I believe such an engagement would require much more in-depth elaboration to which this thesis isn't suited), and while Saloman is certainly aware of the dangers that an essentialism easily encountered in spiritual forms of thought poses, I also want to suggest that even, or especially, a psychedelic form of politics needs to put the tracing back on the map. I am not advertising a hyper-rationalist critique devoid of the creativity Saloman rightfully embraces; remember, it is the map itself that is much more 'free'-flowing than the tracing. What I am proposing is a materialist approach towards (artistic) politics of mind expansion that considers the map in all its materiality, as opposed to tracing it in a way that through idealist-magical thought actually ends up blocking certain flows while expecting to unlock secrets. Again, this isn't an all-out dismissal of Saloman's ideas on "Spirituality and Magick", as those concepts would have to be expanded on – just some cautionary materialist impulses in the context of my own limited project. Similarly, while 'psychic secession' is a potent and inspiring concept (and the title of a fantastic album), especially when deployed in the decidedly social framework of Yellow Swans' / Saloman and Swanson's DIY activities, the idea of "relationships […] that have no pre-existing structure" is problematic. The 'changing of minds' *should* be radical, but relationships of any type are never entirely free of pre-existing structures and power relations – as mentioned earlier via Foucault and Joseph. Instead, the irreducible politics of Tony Conrad and Throbbing Gristle show that mind expansion, or the changing of minds or perception, can be approached through a constant challenge, through continuous experimentation, and I do think that Yellow Swans and their peers are familiar with many of the artistic and economic tools useful for such endeavors.

Zimmerman argues that the San Francisco counterculture perished under its own contradictions – indeed, her book's main task is the tracing of these very contradictions. The contradictions between a counterculture eager, or at least propagating the idea, to 'drop out' and its lifestyle and non-oppositional attitude on the one hand and the very part it still played in an exploitative capitalist system on the other hand led to its downfall. While Zimmerman is very right to point out and criticize the counterculture's contradictions, even more so in those areas where its pretensions and double standards

upheld and added to direct exploitation and oppression (notably in its often horrifying gender politics), I think it could also be useful to follow up these elaborations by going further beyond the very question of these contradictions. The interrogation and demystification of the San Francisco counterculture, its practices, development and demise are certainly necessary, but it is also useful to focus on the very productivity of these contradictory relations and to identify the existence of emancipatory potentials in the criticized entities. As Jeremy Gilbert argues after pointing out the superficial similarities between, among others, the Bay Area counterculture and Silicon Valley:

> Capitalism needs to allow these great laboratories of change to thrive, and it cannot always direct and capture what comes out of them, although it will try. When it cannot, when they become connected to other social forces, progressive social changes can ensue.[682]

Gilbert has elaborated on ideas about the relation between individuality and collectivity in the arts, specifically music. Referring to Jason Toynbee's suggestion that individual authors are always "social authors" within a "radius of creativity", he writes:

> What both of these terms give expression to is the idea of musical creativity as inherently collective in character, and as such inherently distributed, the effective product of oblique collaborations and mediated relays of influence between musicians, composers, producers, audiences, promoters, technicians, critics, journalists etc.[683]

Commodification can hide this as the focus is on the (seemingly) individual artist who needs to sell her / his product. All this (and more: as will be discussed below, Gilbert isn't demonizing commodification per se) is very much in line with Gilbert's ideas of Cultural Studies' potential role in "map[ping] the terrain"[684] of, for example, anti-capitalist activity. How does 'free folk', 40 years later, relate to capitalism, especially the neoliberal capitalism dominant in the years discussed here? During the Q&A session that followed his Audio Poverty conference talk in Berlin, David Keenan was asked a question that is inaudible but presumably related to anticapitalist activities. He very much disputes a correlation between these musical-social activities and anticapitalism, arguing that "they're inventing their own subculture, they're selling their records, they're trying to be musicians". True: it is hard to deny that the production and publication of these musics takes place within a widely established capitalist system.

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[682] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 109.
[683] Gilbert, Jeremy: Capitalism, Creativity and Continuity in the Sonic Sphere, in: culturalstudies.org.uk. http://www.culturalstudies.org.uk/creativity%20and%20continuity%20.pdf, 4. Last accessed: January 22, 2013.
[684] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 3.

Even the smallest DIY labels tend to use mass-produced commodities as media for releases (CD-Rs, tapes…), and while musicians and label owners often are very fond of exchanging records with fellow artists and entrepreneurs, these releases are, first and foremost, sold – although through small shops like Volcanic Tongue (owned by Keenan and his partner and fellow interviewee Heather Leigh Murray) or even through tiny shops like Aaron Dilloway's appointment-only basement store[685]. Keenan claims that

> these people are fighting for a place in the marketplace, my shop exists to help them have a voice *in* the marketplace, you know. It's not that they're burning it down, it's to fight for an equal voice for other people[686]

What Keenan considers important is "outlaw stances"[687]. However, one danger here might be to construct a binary opposition between a pro- or at least simply capitalist side and an anticapitalist contingent – see below.

Does Keenan's assertion that "rock'n'roll is completely capitalist"[688] contradict his own calls for liberation through the pursuit of 'illegitimate' creative activity? As Gilbert points out, commodification isn't necessarily detrimental to music. Popular music's innovation always took place in a "material, economic and technical framework of commodification."[689] This is, in fact, one of Gilbert's arguments against a totalizing conception of capitalism as all-enveloping. What is at stake, rather, are questions of exploitation or monopolization, not necessarily commodification itself.[690]

In addition to protecting music from cultural-economic forces of homogenization, Keenan sees the potential of state intervention as a danger. In his contribution to The Wire's "Collateral Damage" series of essays, Keenan questions state funding for the arts, urging "the underground" to "refus[e] these narcotic compromises while daring to create its own economy."[691] This is, no doubt, a touchy subject – and it is one point at which the micropolitics of these underground musics are particularly obviously indivisible from politics on a larger, more institutionalized, level. If the – minor? – (micro-)politics of rhizomatic DIY underground music scenes are particularly concerned with the upholding or deepening of an autonomy that, not least, allows for self-determined creative realization, then state funding may in turn appear like a

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[685] cf. Keenan, David: Collateral Damage, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 329 (July 2011), 18.
[686] Keenan: AP Lecture.
[687] Ibid.
[688] Ibid.
[689] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 122.
[690] cf. ibid., 121–124.
[691] Keenan: Collateral Damage, 18.

particularly treacherous mode employed by apparatus of capture[692] that is the state to domesticate wild, irreducible manifestations of creativity. While this is a valid concern, it also risks advocating a specific type of 'dropping out' that sees the state as monolithic and maybe inherently oppressive and that relinquishes a view of the state as social – conceptualizing (internationalized) states as, for example, "second-order condensations of societal power relations"[693] at least allows for certain degrees of complexity in the analysis and negotiation of agency regarding societal influence on what the state is or, rather, can do. Of course, Keenan is right to advocate a search for strong, sustainable underground music economics (as his Audio Poverty talk shows[694], this is aligned to a belief in small groups of fans' interests in intense, deep connections to the actual artwork – also see Amanda Brown's "Collateral Damage" essay[695] on this question of personal, material aesthetics). However, DIY scenes are incredibly hard to sustain.[696] Referring to Fisher's *Capitalist Realism*, Marcus Boon writes that "the existing political and economic structure" is presented as "the only guarantor of our existence – at the very same moment that the system has ceased to fulfil its promise." He goes on to criticize "the dream of a folky, highly local and ultimately stable capitalism" as an illusion, taking into consideration "the deeper reality of capitalism"[697] and how it manifests today. Boon sees the tendency towards free downloading not as entirely negative but rather as another example of musical contexts potentially serving as "experimental laborator[ies]", in this case "for the construction of a post-capitalist society". The (utopian) aim, Boon argues, should rather be "to expand that freedom to other economic and political domains."[698]

But meanwhile, as such a desirable future takes time to be realized: how to foster generous and collective musical activities, if that's what one focuses on? As the aforementioned *Collateral Damage* series of essays shows, there definitely is fighting going on *in* the marketplace, with musicians, label owners and critics trying to come to term with the precarious situation, even crises, associated with the proliferation of new

[692] cf. for example Deleuze / Guattari: A Thousand Plateaus, 468–522.
[693] Brand / Görg / Wissen : Second-Order Condensations.
[694] cf. Keenan: AP Lecture.
[695] Brown, Amanda: Collateral Damage, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 331 (September 2011), 14.
[696] cf. ibid.; Gilbert, Jeremy: Capitalism, creativity and the crisis in the music industry, in: *OurKingdom. power & liberty in Britain* (September 14, 2012). http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/jeremy-gilbert/capitalism-creativity-and-crisis-in-music-industry. Last accessed: January 11, 2013.
[697] Boon, Marcus: Collateral Damage, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 333 (November 2011), 16.
[698] Ibid.

technologies – mainly the Internet and its dissemination opportunities. Labels still have a chance to remain sustainable[699], but it is always fragile. Invigorated by the question of how creativity – now not just an artistic issue but very much an economic one[700] – can be conceptualized and handled in neoliberal capitalism, Jeremy Gilbert takes an approach towards scenes' creativity, inspired by Hardt and Negri, that involves the idea that capitalism's "preemptive mechanisms of capture [are] dependent upon the creative power of the multitude for their efficacy" and that "creativity [is] itself ultimately independent of those mechanisms, at least at the level of its virtual potency." Crucially for my thesis, Gilbert's understanding of the 'hardcore continuum' scenes he writes on appears applicable to 'free folk' scenes as well. In both cases, (extremely) small record labels and stores are present; and while the aspect of actual (semi-)illegality is of greater presence in the former case (on the level of venue / event illegality and in its involvement of pirate radio stations), the DIY / "hobbyist" / non-profit aspect was and is crucial for both scenes (or scene accumulations). Gilbert questions Simon Reynolds' and Steve Goodman's descriptions of "these dense networks of commercial activity" as 'micro-capitalism', as "it is not evident that levels of accumulation at any stage in the process were really adequate for it to be accurately described as 'capitalist' at all."[701] Maybe, suggests Gilbert, concepts of "*non-capitalist* market exchange"[702] might be more adequate choices for such scenes' conceptualization.

> From this perspective, a system of free market exchange need not necessarily involve high levels of capital accumulation (profits for capitalists) or exploitation (workers / producers generating profits for capitalists), and so is, in effect, not necessarily capitalist at all.[703]

In turn, the homogenizing forces opposed by many people in the fields I am discussing could at least partially be explained as manifestations of capitalism's tendency to create "monopoly *anti-markets*; situations in which capitalists work to *shut down* the free circulation of commodities"[704], an idea that Gilbert takes from Fernand Braudel and Manuel De Landa. One example: Matt Valentine traces a lineage of DIY formats, describable in terms of a pragmatic, "utilitarian method" (mimeograph printing, tapes, CD-Rs), harnessed in creative ways over time – not least for

[699] cf. Lumbleau, Eric: Collateral Damage, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 334 (December 2011), 14.
[700] cf. Gilbert: Capitalism, Creativity and Continuity, 1
[701] Ibid., 13.
[702] Ibid., 14. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[703] Ibid.
[704] Ibid. (Emphasis in the original text.)

> anything that's rebelling against the Clear Channels, the sort of larger homogenized stations, that harbour what I would call the evil music, that's what oppresses the sort of creative music from actually reaching more people becoming aware, 'cause that's always for me the aim is you want people to hear the music, and that's one thing with all the things that I've done, it's never been to obscure, or to be elitist[705]

He reconnects this to his own activities over the years, using agricultural language: "there'd been harvest from it" and "I think once I realized that I couldn't manage the harvest, when I got to a certain point, that's when we stopped fertilizing anything that might have seemed excessive", a downscaling that enabled sustainability. Indeed,

> by keeping the harvest a certain size, Erika and I have been able to in some way be right on the street, taking care of our thing on the street, which enables us to be a lot more I think in tune with a real people system (MS: Yeah) […] of us making music and then how that music is then digested or people receiving one of the objects that we've made and knowing that say, there's a tangent to that […][706]

Valentine emphasizes that "you can do things the DIY aesthetic, the hands-on, the cottage industry is a viable method". He knows that "it's gonna be very difficult […] anytime in our generation for someone to be able to do *that* without say, involving other economic systems". However, it is "the idea that you can propagate these sort of homegrown concepts"[707] that he is primarily discussing.

To return to Gilbert here is also to anticipate some thoughts relevant for chapter 5.2 and my conclusion. Designating such scenes as 'non-capitalist' doesn't necessarily imply a greater emancipatory political power – although it might imply a certain potential. Gilbert, referring to Maurizio Lazzarato and Jacques Attali, also locates such potential in

> music's capacity to operate at the level of corporeal affect makes it a particularly important site for the generation of collective potential and for the exploration of 'possible worlds', of new ways of feeling and being which can have wider social and political consequences.[708]

At the same time, "as Goodman has demonstrated, music cultures are also potentially important sites at which such 'possible worlds' are contained by capital, commodified in anticipation of any possible actualisation". This is, according to Gilbert, "the typical power mechanism of what Deleuze calls the 'control society'"[709] which thus returns to

[705] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Matt Valentine (January 17, 2013).
[706] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[707] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[708] Gilbert: Capitalism, Creativity and Continuity, 16–17.
[709] Ibid., 17.

haunt this paper and, presumably, the psychedelic underground musics it discusses. While this chapter will soon arrive at its conclusion, these questions will return on one level or another in the next one.

A more recent text by Gilbert – a lecture from 2012 – is partially based on the article just quoted but takes a slightly different view at recent developments. Now,

> the most influential sections of capital no longer have much interest in maintaining anti-market monopoly control over musical *content*: while the residual music industry may still rely on its Justin Biebers to generate profit, Apple really doesn't care if you're downloading Bieber or the Beatles or Ash Ra Tempel […].[710]

Meanwhile, "there isn't much need for capital to invest heavily in creative infrastructure of any kind"[711] due to musicians' enthusiastic self-exploitation (presumably based on the motivation that Deleuze's sees as characteristic to societies of control[712]). To ensure a creative and positive future for music scenes, Gilbert points to "collective subscription scheme[s]"[713] and to state funding – the latter of which he sees as unlikely. However, I think it is at the very least another reminder that the state, or society as a whole, should never be conceptualized as total, monolithic, unchangeable entity. I suggest that DIY labels' sustainability shouldn't be dismissed outright, but – hopefully cooperative – modes of support and coping with survival should be established. That many labels and musicians in these scenes are very close-knit and in constant exchange doesn't have to lead to a politically and economically potent model able to sustain itself. However, this fact may be beneficial in the search for such cooperative options of survival. Simultaneously, it might be possible to harness the openness and creativity encountered in these scenes to search for genuine future options, possibly through articulation to broader political project beyond capitalist realism (see chapter 5.2).

Once again, it all comes down to a possibly utopian / naïve (on my part) belief in the potentials of these music scenes. I hope to have shown that while it would be possible to trace contradictions similar to those described by Zimmerman in the San Francisco counterculture's case, any such analysis of these psychedelic / drone / noise scenes would have to take into account specific political implications of practice that actually *do* have emancipatory potential, even though they do not always counter hegemonic

[710] Gilbert: Capitalism, creativity and the crisis. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[711] Ibid.
[712] cf. Deleuze: Postscript, 7.
[713] Gilbert: Capitalism, creativity and the crisis.

social / economic / political structures and strictures directly. While it is possible to trace political strands of importance (civil rights, opposition to wars, criticism of capitalism, feminism and many more), they all have shifted greatly since the 1960s. The questions of alignment can't be the same, making a direct application of the San Francisco counterculture's alignments or lack thereof to contemporary scenes as difficult as a direct application of Cagean innovations and their reception to these scenes' aesthetics. None of this is impossible: but further research will have to be done, tracing shifting power relations over the years more forcefully.

Vast contextual differences would have to be analyzed: such DIY scenes' success doesn't nearly match that of the San Francisco counterculture's biggest names; even those musicians most associated with life outside of mainstream culture's spaces do not claim a lazy utopia; and capitalist economics as well as related forms of power have shifted. Musicians may try to construct their own spaces so as to make their circles sustainable and present an alternative model of living; such local scenes are always in danger of 'jumping the shark', being commercialized. But no free folk community will ever be in the situation to even run risk of enabling potentially violent biker groups' presence as 'protectors' in the street.[714] Generally, danger of laziness might be averted not least through the experience-inspired building of strong, sustainable connections practiced by musicians like Natalie Mering and Eva Saelens as mentioned[715] in *Gender construction*. Psychedelia has served dubious discourses of naturalization – but here are people actually attempting to change their mind for the (socially conceived) better. DIY economies are affected by larger economic change – but then, they have never been entirely stable. At least they are attempting to introduce alternative economic models not directed towards the accumulation of capital, and maybe, it is in such circles that a more widely communal economy will be able to flourish. However, many of these potentials remain unactualized, or at least unactualized beyond smaller circles which, in the end, are always dependent on power relations that far exceed any that may be dubiously conceptualized as 'internal'.

[714] cf. Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 34–35.
[715] cf. Spiegel: Gender construction, 135–136

5 Politics and music: articulations, disarticulations

This chapter's key text is a short one – Mark Gridley's criticism of (to him) inadequate construction of connections between (1960s) free jazz musics and the civil rights movement's politics. It will inspire a few short discussions related to the articulation of music and politics, but the chapter will mainly be devoted to a presentation and discussion of interviewees' thoughts on the topic of politics in these scenes.

5.1 The text

Inspired by a paper in jazz history sent to him that contained many flaws in its connection of free jazz's innovations to sociopolitical struggles, Gridley sets out to dissect correlations postulated in such arguments. His aim is an explicitly educational one as he fears that students of jazz history might be confused by two interrelated misunderstandings that he tackles in this text, "Misconceptions in Linking Free Jazz with the Civil Rights Movement"[716]:

> The first misunderstanding is that during the 1960s African Americans striving for their political freedoms also transferred those strivings to include the striving for musical approaches (later termed "free jazz") in which freedoms were sought from adherence to fixed progressions of accompaniment chords and meter. The second misunderstanding is that angry sounding music is a direct result of avant-garde musicians using jazz as a tool of personal protest toward social injustices.[717]

Gridley tackles this issue on multiple levels. He fears that in an educational context, "fine distinctions, caveats, and parenthetical remarks" are easily lost, resulting (in this case) in imprecise thinking on the relations between contexts and musical developments. While, according to Gridley, some free jazz musicians did express anger related to sociopolitical issues, free-form innovation already took place before the 1960s (in some cases through white musicians) and wasn't inspired by civil rights issues; and even in the 1960s, many free jazz artists were active without such inspiration. He goes on to investigate the origin of such free-form styles, differentiating between the respective techniques of musicians who were "facile in devising jazz lines compatible

[716] Gridley, Mark: Misconceptions in Linking Free Jazz with the Civil Rights Movement: Illusory correlations Between Politics and the Origination of Jazz Styles, in: *Jazzhouse Diaries* (Feburary 15, 2009). http://www.jazzhouse.org/diary/2009/02/mark-gridley-misconceptions-in-linking-free-jazz-civil-rights/. Last accessed: January 26, 2013. I am referring to the Jazzhouse Diaries version of this text; a slightly different version had been published two years earlier: Gridley, Mark: Misconceptions in Linking Free Jazz with the Civil Rights Movement, in: *College Music Symposium* 47 (2007), 139–155.
[717] Gridley: Misconceptions (*Jazzhouse Diaries*).

with chord progressions"[718] (Lennie Tristano, Jimmy Giuffre, Shorty Rogers, and later: Don Cherry, John Coltrane) and ones who weren't (Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman). Without wanting to question the quality and originality of the latter artists' musics, Gridley considers this an important distinction in terms of intentions and personal contexts leading to innovations: neither group's inventiveness was politically inspired.

The positing of such causal relationships also ignores that artists' creativity has many inspirations: "Forces behind any given jazz performance include personal, technical, and environmental factors, all impinging at the same time." Meanwhile, the distinction between inspiration and effect, perception or even appropriation of music is often muddled. Also, individual / exceptional pieces might be accorded greater attention or representativity than is due in the context of such questions of music's relation to politics. The sometime equation of free jazz and avant-garde jazz (which doesn't necessarily use free-form styles) adds to potential confusion, and commentators' perceptions and views (sometimes in opposition to musicians' own takes on their work) may be mistaken for actual "facts of relations between music and politics", thus skewing the perspectives of "uncritical readers". Instrumental music, in addition, doesn't express anything but itself: there is no definite meaning to be found in the absence of lyrics. The entire problematic is further worsened by "serious oversights and muddy thinking when linking civil rights anger and freedom seeking with free jazz", like ignorance of some free improvisation's more mellow character. Some writers, like LeRoi Jones and Frank Kofsky, are criticized for linking their own political stances to musicians whose work they appreciated.

Gridley concludes by once again unlinking free jazz from civil rights politics, arguing that "[t]he free-form musicians' freedom was musical, not social", despite there being certain exceptions – musicians who did claim a political influence or impetus to their music were fewer than suggested in media coverage. Sometimes, this – to Gridley – lazy, potentially sensationalist type of coverage might be the easier or attractive option, hence the presence of such generalizations. Gridley wants to

> distinguish between (a) personal creativity, (b) music that is motivated by political anger (which turns out to be very little), and (c) music that has been adopted as a symbolic expression of a political movement[719]

[718] Ibid.
[719] Ibid.

He once again returns to the theme of jazz history education and argues that "[i]t may be wise to just introduce the jazz styles themselves without venturing into concurrent socio-cultural history"[720] so as to avoid giving wrong impressions on styles' geneses. This is an approach criticized by Brian Harker in a reply[721] to Gridley's (original *College Music Symposium* version of the) text. Harker, himself one of the authors criticized by Gridley, counters that "showing students that jazz did not evolve in a vacuum is worth the risk" and accuses Gridley, while lauding his intentions, of constructing a straw man. In his view, connections between music and sociopolitical issues are usually presented in greater complexity than Gridley insinuates. Referring to the concept of *zeitgeist*, he suggests reflection (rather than influence) as a useful concept to distinguish such relations. In addition, Harker questions certain presumptions implied in Gridley's text (like musicians' utterances presenting their intention / approach in full). "The broad outlines of a style, it seems clear, are shaped by ideas in society"[722]; the relations between music and political concerns are complex.

Once again, a few illustrative connections. During an interview phase revolving around a tour with Yellow Swans in 2004, Sharon Cheslow mentions

> that a lot of us were into improvised music, free jazz, electronic music, and that was something new (MS: Yeah). A lot of my friends from punk didn't have those tastes. They weren't as open-minded in their musical tastes. I remember Eva [Saelens] and I bonded on that 'cause she really loves jazz"[723]

Talking about his early instrumental development and philosophy, Matt Valentine recounts that, playing the saxophone before getting into stringed instruments, he "got exposed to Coltrane and things like that pretty early" and "was more into the Albert Ayler style of marching band than I was playing the really strict, you know, I was more into the folky thing"[724]. Indeed, Albert Ayler's style is very present in discussion of these scenes and featured in both of David Keenan's presentations[725] examined for my project. Glenn Donaldson, in a foxy digitalis interview, suggests that

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[720] Ibid.
[721] Harker, Brian: In Defense of Context in Jazz History: A Response to Mark Gridley, in: *College Music Symposium* 48 (2008), 157–159.
[722] Ibid., 159.
[723] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (January 11, 2013).
[724] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[725] cf. Keenan: Both Sides = Now; Keenan: AP Lecture.

> Free Jazz had a huge influence on all the outsider/energy filled/weirdo music that laid the groundwork for everything that's going on today. It was so powerful it pushed all the rock people off the cliff & inspired people to freak-out however they could.[726]

This is quite reminiscent of Bruce Russell's take on free music as mentioned earlier.[727]

5.2 Politics and American 'Free Folk' music(s): a short survey

Every now and then, these musics will be connected to politics by musicians or writers, but, as argued in *Gender construction*, this articulation isn't explicit[728]; it certainly isn't universal.

Some of the introductory texts I discussed in chapter 2.2 include interesting remarks on these scenes' politics. David Keenan writes:

> At this year's Free Folk Fest in the first week of May, outsider voices from an earlier generation were joined by lone visionaries, hermetic isolationists, young marginalised artists, hippy revolutionaries, Country punks, ex-cons, project kids, avant experimentalists, luddite refuseniks, psychedelic rockers and assorted misfits in an attempt to make space for an alternative American narrative, irreconcilable with the prevailing neoconservative vision of the 'New American Century'. And like [Harry] Smith before them, many of the main players regard their music as a potential catalyst for social change.[729]

I have already mentioned Olaf Karnik's 'spiritual community of values', which opposes "Corporate America"[730] and is frustrated by politicians' idea of politics, countering those aspects of society through focus on the social and on mutual care, manifesting in musicians' participation in various different groups. Martin Büsser considers these scenes' collective improvisation decidedly political, likening Black Dice to AMM – but probably without explicit socialism. Instead of protest songs, "*materialästhetische Abweichung*"[731] – a deviation in material aesthetics – is harnessed here.

Politics might be analytically divisible into micro- and macropolitics, but the number of modes of politics' discussion is vast even within as limited a project as this thesis's. In a

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[726] Glenn Donaldson, quoted in Rose, Brad: Glenn Donaldson and Loren Chasse, in: *foxy digitalis* : features (June 14, 2005). http://www.digitalisindustries.com/foxyd/features.php?which=45. Last accessed: January 31, 2013.

[727] Also see, for example, 2007's Free Noise tour for an explicit articulation of 2000s noise music to earlier free jazz. cf. Davies, Sam: Free Noise: C Spencer Yeh/ Culver/John Edwards/Paul Hession/Metalux/Evan Parker/ Yellow Swans/John Wiese, in: The *Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 280 (June 2007), 71.

[728] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 188.

[729] Keenan, David: *The Fire Down Below*, 34.

[730] Karnik: Free Rock.

[731] Büsser: Befreite Klänge, 28–29.

recent email, Eric Carbonara details a maturation process broadly relevant to one's life / practice:

> I think the longer you spend working and living within communities that are so-called "on the fringe" (artistically speaking) it's actually easy to forget that there are more mainstream avenues for your life's work… it's not that you're ignorant of that world, it's just that it's insignificant to your work and a waste of time, you grow older and become more accustomed, comfortable, and confident in what you're doing… I think that maturation process parallels one's approach to politics and gender relations…[732]

This has, of course, affected Carbonara's approach to "all the emotional and inter-personal conflict drama that is attached to those small communities", and he "think[s] that process of maturing speaks volumes on inter-scene politics…"[733] Of course, Carbonara's trajectory, as has been discussed already, is rather singular – but it showcases one model of how political and social growth can be wedded to artistic growth or maturation. It is also a reminder: politics change, on the personal level as well as on institutional levels.

Generally, there doesn't appear to be much room for explicitly conservative politics in these scenes.[734] Chris Moon has "never heard of any of the artists on my label or any of the people in this scene that were Republicans (MS: Yeah), conservatives or any of that, […] I mean a lot of them are like neo-vegan hippie-ish, you know (both laugh)"[735]. Such assumptions can be connected to the music's openness and aesthetic inquisitiveness, as discussed already[736] in *Gender construction*'s remarks on politics. But as, for example, Lawrence Grossberg's anecdote of a vast contingent of Reagan voters attending a Fred Frith concert[737] as well as Zimmerman's critique of the counterculture show, political allegiance on a (sub-)cultural basis shouldn't be taken for granted.[738] What are interviewees' takes on the theme of politics and power relations in these scenes?

One seemingly rare example of an album in whose reception politics are discussed is Charalambides' *Likeness*. The label's website states:

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[732] Personal email correspondence with Eric Carbonara (November 30, 2012).
[733] Ibid.
[734] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 183–188.
[735] Interview with Chris Moon (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009).
[736] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 183–184.
[737] cf. Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 169.
[738] cf. for example ibid., 115, 137.

> Lyrical content largely derives from public domain American popular song from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, edited, rearranged, and largely deconstructed by Christina [Carter] into abstract 'protest' songs for the century at hand.[739]

In our interview, Carter comments that *Likeness* was

> a comment on a sort of… internal malaise or spiritual malaise […] it was very fucking frustrating and horrible to have George Bush as a president, and, I lived through Reagan, Bush… then Bush again, the junior, […] you know it's weird, because it affects you and yet it doesn't affect you but, it's a tone, it's a pall, it's sort of general wash, it colors your experience and to have that be the majority of my life so far is terrible, and, so I just felt that I wanted to do something about that personal feeling… but I'm not good at writing narrative songs, so, I don't wanna write, like, "hey, George Bush sucks (MS laughs), look at what he did", you know, "I was in high school and Reagan did th-", I don't think it would turn out that good[740]

This appears highly relevant, not least following discussion of the introductory key texts. Politics don't have to be formulated explicitly for music to be conceivable as political; of course, in this case, they were present and carefully formulated but transmitted less directly through Charalambides' music. Here, (macro-)politics impact on a micropolitical, affective, molecular level, and music (including lyrics) allows Carter to articulate this vague impact, maybe her perception of a rigidly-conservatively tinged structure of feeling[741] which her music counters on a molecular level. As quoted in Gender construction[742], Tara Burke discusses ideas that position the "New Weird America" as "a reaction against what was going on in this country":

> I mean, to me, music is more about emotion and feeling and if, but it's kind of, at the same time, […] maybe it reflects what's going on at the time but […] it's more like a… … subconscious thing, […] like I remember, after 9/11 happened and all that, I mean, I was emotionally distraught but I never *consciously* said like, "oh yeah, I'm gonna write (MS: Yeah, yeah, yeah) this *protest* song" (TB and MS laugh), you know what I mean[743]

The articulation of music to political views is extremely different to achieve and handle, and there is no consensus on how to make it work. Comparing the noise / improvised music scenes she had been participating in to earlier punk and riot grrrl, Sharon Cheslow points out the less direct, non-narrative character of the former which works

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[739] KRANK 113 - Charalambides "Likeness", in: *Kranky*. http://www.brainwashed.com/common/htdocs/discog/krank113.html. Last accessed: January 24, 2013.
[740] Interview with Christina Carter (Austin, July 28, 2009).
[741] cf. Williams, Raymond: Theorie und Verfahren der Kulturanalyse, in: *Innovationen. Über den Prozeßcharakter von Literatur und Kultur* (Frankfurt am Main 1983), 45–73. As last time, I would like to refer to Lawrence Grossberg who calls a structure of feeling "a description of experience, of what it felt like to live at a particular time and place." (Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 62.)
[742] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 184.
[743] Interview with Tara Burke (Orwigsburg, July 17, 2009).

"through different aesthetic means, so it was through a more conceptual and abstract method".

> *Now*, did that really work? And I still debate this, I go back and forth between wanting to incorporate abstraction into my work versus wanting to use lyrics, I still sing and write lyrics, because I still think that's really important, a lot of people don't get what you're trying to say, unless they can hear it directly, or see it directly, so I go back and forth, but I think a lot of us are grappling with those issues, of "how can we experiment with music aesthetics while creating a radical culture, how can it be radical if it's completely abstract"[744]

Indeed, "noise was a way that we were expressing our feeling about what was going on in the United States, and we were *angry* and *upset* and *scared*, and it was coming out in the music (MS: Mhm), really strongly"[745] – and artwork and song titles would reflect this as well. Similar questions are posed on numerous levels. While in the original interview, asked whether there are attempts to introduce ideas of freedom and emancipation into music, Eric Arn was advocating a propagation or dissemination of such ideas through practice ("you don't wanna preach, it's not as effective as doing, as showing people by doing, or how you do things"[746]), his recent email takes a slightly different turn, or rather reflects further on such questions. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, his "experience in the music scene was relatively apolitical", the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 had notable effects:

> I was politically activated immediately in opposition to the jingoism and hawkish patriotic sentiments that cropped up in reaction to that tragedy. I found the forums for underground musical discourse that I participated in then (primarily the chug-changa and droneon email lists) to be useful and even cathartic options for folks to express their thoughts and feelings on the national situation.[747]

While Arn "found near unanimous antiwar and pro-civil rights sentiments among my friends in the music scene", opinions on how to approach these issues were divided between "those active in protest and political activities and those who chose to do nothing about it", the latter often feeling "that activism was futile" due to the pro-war side's strength. Arn himself was very much dedicated to "a small local organization called Peace in Austin"; as was the case with other musicians, his activism was divorced from his artistic practice, and the music at protest events ("typically 60s throwbacks or

[744] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).
[745] Ibid. + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (December 28, 2011).
[746] Interview with Eric Arn (Vienna, June 21, 2009). Also see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 184, for related discussion.
[747] Personal email correspondence with Eric Arn (November 30, 2012).

mainstream singer-songwriter types") tended to disappoint him. Since moving to Austria, Arn has been less involved in political activism, instead focusing more on music.

> I would like to think this also has political consequences, as I do firmly believe that the open-mindedness involved with experiencing non-mainstream art, and the shifts in consciousness associated with underground/experimental/psychedelic culture do lead to related shifts in political thinking and social interactions – be the change you want to see, free your mind and your ass will follow, etc.[748]

However, this is an argument that sometimes reminds Arn of politically inactive peers in Austin. Arn considers the recent rebirth[749] of *Arthur Magazine* (the "one shining beacon of combined weird music appreciation, general outside-the-norm thinking and aesthetics, and political activism that was extremely popular among folks I know in the musical community"[750]) a reason for optimism. Eric Arn's example shows how, in addition, it is not just a question of how to produce, codify, detail one's music but can just as much be about (relative) relegation of arts to the sidelines once political activity takes on greater priority. That someone is a musician doesn't necessarily imply that he or she has to be politically active *as* a musician. What is also very noteworthy here is that the 9/11 attacks and the political activities following it are at least *perceived* by Arn as game changers on not just an international but also a local political level. The issue at hand is one most closely aligned with sovereign power: violent politics are opposed, and a call for such opposition may harness potentially oppositional or at least pacifist forces for overt activity. Maybe sovereign, repressive power, seen as particularly outmoded and *known* for its brutal modes of sustenance, serves to mobilize its opponents better than other forms do? However, this isn't necessarily successful, there is no automatism to it.

Generally, political activism simply isn't very present. Britt Brown writes:

> The music communities we traffic in are, for the most part, resolutely apolitical. Most of the artists are concerned with more inward-looking theologies or philosophies. There's usually a blurry, watered-down 'liberalism' attitude involved, but nothing concretely political. In the mid-2000's, after Bush was re-elected, some of our friends in the noise scene flirted with shades of political activism (Yellow Swans, Foot Village, etc) but by and large those sentiments faded as

[748] Ibid.
[749] cf. ARTHUR NO. 33, OUR FIRST ISSUE IN FOUR YEARS, IS OUT NOW, in: *Arthur Magazine*. http://arthurmag.com/arthur-no-33-our-first-issue-in-four-years-is-out-now/. Last accessed: January 17, 2013.
[750] Personal email correspondence with Eric Arn (November 30, 2012).

> his 2nd term drew to a close. In the past few years, however, political activism has been pretty non-existent in the fringe music worlds we operate in...[751]

He suggests that "[m]ainly, musicians justify their political apathy by invoking some variation of the 'The Personal Is Political' reasoning. Which is valid to a certain extent, but it's also a pretty passive stance. I don't imagine this attitude will change or evolve for at least a half decade or so." Asked why more political activity appears to take place "in other creative fields"[752], Brown suggests that

> "[b]y and large music is more interested in its own constituent elements – the styles of the actual sounds themselves. And, thematically, music tends to be about very personal matters, or abstract/inexpressible ideas and emotions, or very broad timeless human issues. Politics is ultimately about specificity and engagement, attempting to take a stand or play a part in the events of one's own time."[753]

Brown himself offers "some counter-examples" like Crass, riot grrrl, "certain reggae artists", but generally considers music "one of the most deliberately insular art forms, for better or worse."[754] Here it is worth returning to Brown's own assertion in 2009's interview that the psychedelic musics discussed therein could be considered a "hypnotic, inspiring mirror for you to sort of get out of it what you want"[755], and "in that sense it's just incredibly universal", allowing the listener to "make the meaning"[756] – again, for better or worse. From Brown's viewpoint, there isn't much change in sight: "There are more distractions than ever before, and thus less likelihood of a heightened political awareness materializing."[757] Some of these quotes stage a return to questions posed earlier. In a way, there is no real reason why musicians *should* have to be politically active – or at least not more so than others. To this, one could respond using the already cited observations about artists' privileged, or pioneering, roles. Brown's quotes show sympathy for both sides of the issue – although to divide between two sides seem like a dangerous endeavor on my part. The very power that Brown ascribes to music – his comment about the "hypnotic, inspiring mirror" that such musics can be oozes fascination – shows its affective weight, configurable in numerous ways[758]. Also, one crucial aspect of the problematic might be found in Brown's suggestion that such

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[751] Personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (November 25, 2012).
[752] Ibid.
[753] Personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (December 10, 2012).
[754] Ibid.
[755] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009). This part was quoted in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 185, already.
[756] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009).
[757] Personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (December 10, 2012).
[758] cf. for example: Grossberg: We Gotta Get out of This Place, 148–156, 234–239.

vaguer, psychedelic musics are "incredibly universal", practically content-less as they are. The impact of (explicit) politics is seen as a delimiting one, capturing the otherwise non-signifying, or at least not necessarily signifying, musics and molding them into a potentially exclusionary form. Another question for anyone interesting in harnessing such musics' emancipatory potentials might thus be: why exactly should the articulation or expression of politics necessarily be less universal than (such) aesthetics? Or rather, how can levels on which politics are necessarily seen as more universal than (such) aesthetics be made to matter[759] to at least the same extent as those on which the opposite is the case?

Sometimes, the connection between politics and music is actually avoided. Having received the email containing questions for this new thesis, Spencer Clark replied that "the political part may be a bit tough for me, as I don't really see any connection anymore, which is of course an answer in itself, a-politic I guess."[760] His interview comments for my *Gender construction* thesis certainly show political awareness (Clark links the dominance of white males in such musics to the fact that "subcultures are created through capitalism", "a heightened level of [which] is usually experienced by white people who are middle to upper middle class or rich", but it isn't primary to his work; he rather tries to distance his work from such questions and "social constructs" (involvement in feminism, "being liberal"…). Refusing to focus his practice on an involvement in scenes, he argues that

> it's not radical to be always doing the same thing, and your life always revolving around the same thing (MS: Yeah), maybe you're allowing more bands to play at your house and sleep on your floor and eat, like, pasta with vegetables, but, you're not radical as a person (MS: Yeah) by being really, overly involved in something, I think, you're radical as a person by having new experiences, you know what I mean?[761]

In a sense, this may constitute a type of dropping out analogous to the one Zimmerman describes and criticizes. To return to Clark's earlier quotes, there is an attempt to to not "identify" with anything other than the "imaginative universe" that needs preservation. Certainly, a purity, an "imaginative universe" free of power relations can't be created, and I think Clark is well-aware that in many ways, power relations and politics in

[759] cf. for example ibid., 79–87.
[760] Personal email correspondence with Spencer Clark (November 21, 2012).
[761] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009).

general "organises the space [he] move[s] in"[762] – on larger scale, at least, whereas Clark's (and others') space on a smaller scale might still be a somewhat autonomous field of artistic DIY activity, never entirely stable but at least always helpful. All this is obviously to be seen in the context of the investigation of 'own worlds' I introduced in chapter 3.3. I think I have shown that, depending on context and articulation, such activities can be considered micropolitical even when no explicit affirmation thereof is granted. One question to ask here and follow in future studies is: how can such potentials be harnessed, how can such musics / 'other worlds' be articulated to more broadly emancipatory issues without impinging unduly on the intent behind the creation of such worlds, limiting its force?

Samara Lubelski grew up in a politically active family:

> My parents were engaged liberals in the 60's – they went to marches, sang songs by the Weavers and Phil Ochs, and actively discussed the news within their social circle (my grandparents on both sides were also very active in union and social organizing).[763]

However, without wanting "to discount the important changes that their generation brought about", she realized that these activities' influence and effects diminished: "[a]s I grew older, I found much of their behavior to be somewhat passive, naive, and ineffective. Ultimately supporting a lifestyle rather than effecting change." Acknowledging that musicians in these scenes are assumed to be "liberal-leaning", she doesn't find politics to be particularly present and much-discussed in these circles. "I feel that the music is personal – there's absolutely no desire to influence, educate or 'change' people's views on anything. In this way I would consider myself a 'free thinker'. The personal is the political."[764] (Lubelski also sent along two links[765] – Abbie Hoffman's testimony at the Chicago Seven trial and information on Adam Curtis's series *The Century of the Self* – to further back up her mail.) Whereas in Spencer Clark's case, political impact from the outside is avoided, here, there is no interest in forcing politics on anyone. This is, arguably, quite in line with Britt Brown's earlier comments on the universality of musics of indeterminate content.

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[762] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 239.
[763] Personal email correspondence with Samara Lubelski (December 6, 2012).
[764] Ibid.
[765] Testimony of Abbie Hoffman in the Chicago Seven Trial. http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/chicago7/hoffman.html. Last accessed: January 26, 2013; The Century of the Self, in: *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Century_of_the_Self. Last accessed: January 26, 2013.

Sharon Cheslow, too, argues that "the personal is the political": "Politics seems more diffuse and confusing than ever, especially since it's so intertwined with the global economic situation. Underground music, by its very nature of being independent, can be a political activity." She writes that

> I never considered myself political in the sense of being a political activist. Any sort of activist type things I did -- such as facilitating discussion groups to discuss political and artistic issues, or writing zines, or playing benefits -- I considered more a type of cultural activism. I've read a lot of political theory and am interested in it. I'm probably more philosophically oriented than politically motivated. In other words, I have no desire to run for government, work with politicians, or to organize for a cause. Some of my song lyrics have had political content, and some of my noise/sound art pieces incorporated political ideas, but I wouldn't call my work political.[766]

Matching the changing density of politics, musicians' approaches have changed too. Whereas punk and riot grrrl explicitly "address[ed] power relations", recent underground musics took different paths:

> In some senses, I think underground music has become so fragmented and connected to corporate culture that it is almost post-ideological. But I think some underground music in the past ten years was radical in that it broke boundaries aesthetically. Music that was about freedom of expression was metaphorically about freedom from oppression. [767]

As Cheslow says, "the increase in free form music in the '90s and '00s through collective activities or collaborations could be seen as political." She also points out that "[a]fter 9/11, a lot of people became more politicized, but it was more explicitly through the Internet than through music."[768]

Despite Cheslow's avowal that she doesn't see herself a "political activist", engagement with power relations, considerations of how to create alternative culture, feminist struggle on numerous levels and other (at least) micropolitical factors are pervasive in her work. However, it should also be noted that her trajectory and position in these scenes is quite different from many others', and such political awareness might have been more present in some of the other (punk, riot grrrl…) scenes she has traversed over the years. Like in Arn's case, 9/11 is seen as a turning point in many people's political perceptions and involvement.

[766] Personal email correspondence with Sharon Cheslow (December 20, 2012).
[767] Ibid.
[768] Ibid.

In her email answering some questions of mine for this paper, Natalie Mering discusses the "lack of political activities":

> I think about how in a lot of ways music scenes have tragically extricated a lot of the political intentions out of the picture, in an attempt to further perpetuate the "fantasy" of such things, to keep the slate free of realities that cause discomfort to a lot of young people, especially modern political problems. Modern political conflict and activity has become so over saturated with conspiracies, paranoia, and the polarization of the two party system. It's extremely unappealing to a lot of artists.[769]

She also sees tendencies towards an interest "in advocating abstract spiritual concepts rather than specific political incentives that relate to wholly un-psychedelic things". Mering's own political thought is very much aware of gendered power relations, not least 'beta male misogyny',

> a new form of misogyny exercised by men who are 'alternative' or 'geeky' and are not your typical confident/dominant misogynists. Instead, they act like they're on everybody's side, even though they may practice a sort of unconscious misogyny because of their lack of awareness/education on the subject.[770]

Mering suggests that there has been an "unfortunate decline in interest in feminist issues" and tries to heighten awareness thereof. This possible decline is very much present on the musical level: many musicians "seem to abandon any political activity in fear of being associated with the few musical genres that are political", including "acoustic punk guitar anthems and riot grrrl". In fact, Mering says because the "misunderstanding [of] gender issues" in US underground music scenes "has become so prevalent, I don't really participate in scenes anymore."[771] While the elements discussed at the beginning of her mail shed some light on the frustrations associated with (macro-) politics, those in the latter part take place on a level similar to that invoked via Eric Carbonara's mail earlier in this chapter: intra-scene micropolitics. This harkens back to my earlier thesis in many ways: while *Gender construction* included a careful but righteous summary appreciation of the openness and fluidity encountered in (big parts of) these scenes, they cannot be taken for granted. As mentioned in the same context, quasi-archaic strictures may remain present or resurface, and as suggested by Mering,

[769] Personal email correspondence with Natalie Mering (December 16, 2012).
[770] Ibid.
[771] Ibid.

new types[772] of gendered power asymmetries and rigidified relations may surface. Here, the spirit of self-reflection and the emphasis on awareness that I invoked towards the end of *Gender construction* might be called for – the raising of awareness is thus an arguably not very radical but absolutely crucial mode of countering such tendencies. This is another aspect that may be successfully articulated to such disruptive forms of practice as those employed by the likes of Tony Conrad and Throbbing Gristle, as well as to the situationist-inspired tactics theorized and employed by Bruce Russell. However, there is one element in Mering's mail that should make my own alarm bells, in particular, ring: Mering's withdrawal from "scenes" implies that the issue is social. Certain moments in *Gender construction* already showed that Mering's use of the term 'scene' might differ from mine[773], and that thesis included her as an example for the (gendered) relevance of one's own construction of sustainable, strong networks (which in my own framework could certainly be considered 'scenes'). But if such a tendency is on the rise, at least in Mering's circles, the political-educational-aesthetic articulation required to counter it truly needs to be a strong one.

Lauding Byron Coley's "No More Bush" shows ("I felt like that was really right on"), Eric Carbonara says:

> I just feel like underground music should *do* something more subversive than just be weird (MS: Mhm), you know, and that's the one thing I feel is lacking with a lot of this free folk type stuff, […] it's in a lot of ways pointless to me, because it doesn't serve any purpose in society other than, it's self-referential and it's referencing obscure things that privileged people had access to, like, "oh I listen to this rare record, I listen to that rare record and, this is the child of these two rare records, here it is", and it's like "OK, so what", […] I mean it's not that all music has to be overtly political or anything, […] and my music certainly isn't at all, other than I'm trying to use it to live in a way that's subversive to, you know, the dominant culture, yeah, maybe I'm wrong, maybe that in itself is enough[774]

The aforementioned "No More Bush" shows[775] in 2008, alongside their "More Hair Less Bush"[776] predecessors, were already discussed in *Gender construction*[777] as

[772] For an article on 'beta male misogyny', see Kennedy, Joe: Ariel Pink And Beta Male Misogyny, in: *The Quietus*. Opinion. Black Sky Thinking. http://thequietus.com/articles/10133-ariel-pink-beta-male-misogyny. Last accessed: January 31, 2013.
[773] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 130, 136.
[774] Interview with Eric Carbonara (Philadelphia, July 16, 2009).
[775] cf. Masters, Marc: Byron Coley / No More Bush Tour. Q+A, in: *Baltimore City Paper* (August 6, 2008). http://www2.citypaper.com/arts/story.asp?id=16108. Last accessed: January 27, 2013; No More Bush Tour 2008, in: *Ecstatic Peace!* (July 9, 2008). http://www.ecstaticpeace.com/news_html/070908_update.html. Last accessed: January 27, 2013.
[776] cf. Oeidecravan: Fête bénéfice de l'Oie (1), in: *Des nouvelles de l'Oie*. http://oiedecravan.blogspot.com/2003/07/fte-bnfice-de-loie-1.html. Last accessed: January 27, 2013.
[777] Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 186–187.

examples for political (and implicitly gender-related) curatorial activities in these scenes; in both tours' cases, and at Chris Grier and Thurston Moore's "Noise Against Fascism"[778] concert in Washington, D.C., numerous interviewees appeared on stage. Another strain of political activity from these circles was the Ecstatic Peace! label's series of videos of artists commenting on the 2008 presidential elections[779], including artists like Don Dietrich, Paul Flaherty, Dredd Foole, Joe McPhee, MV & EE, Sonic Youth and C Spencer Yeh. While Barack Obama generally is supported, there is also some aparthy to be found, as noted in a short article in The Wire. Therein,

> [Thurston] Moore puts the apathy down to "socialpolitical exhaustion in the wake of eight years of Republican nastiness." For artists, he says, "the derision the Republican party applied to such sensual lifestyle choices has been psychologically depressing. That's the real effect of dumbed-down deception by the Republican campaign and it does instill a sense of disenfranchisement."[780]

Moore detects a difference in political activity to hardcore bands' explicitly oppositional stance during the Reagan years, a topic also present in Marc Masters's interview with Byron Coley on the "No More Bush" tour: Coley's remarks are similar to those by Moore, referring to people "feel[ing] beaten down by the inevitability of what's going on now" while "the manipulation continues to get more and more sophisticated."[781]
Carbonara also is one of those interviewees who reference the 1960s, and their counterculture, in political / cultural terms. This doesn't necessarily take the form of outright nostalgia for a once better society; rather, the 1960s are seen as a time of progressive activism and interests manifesting. At the time of the interview, Carbonara showed a careful optimism:

> these are baby steps of creating a new America, you know, and I think it's tied into a lot of things, the political climate of just, during the Bush years people were, just being fed up with the government in general, doing, trying to do more for themselves and just people becoming more green, green-centric, so […] I think that it's a cultural revolution in many ways, not just musically, but, you know, I mean we could have another Republican president after this and culturally go backwards, who knows[782]

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[778] Masters, Marc: Noise Against Fascism, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 253 (March 2005), 85.
[779] ELECTION 2008: Artists Speak Out, in: *Ecstatic Peace! ecstatic peace records + tapes*. http://www.ecstaticpeace.com/election.php. Last accessed: January 27, 2013. cf. Walmsley, Derek: Record label politics, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 297 (November 2008), 13.
[780] Walmsley: Record label politics, 13.
[781] Byron Coley, quoted in Masters: Byron Coley / No More Bush Tour. Also see Coley's remarks comparisons between noise and the Bush era on the one hand and hardcore and the Reagan era on the other. Coley himself remained undecided on these, at least at the time (cf. Coley, Byron: No Fun Festival, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 307 (September 2009), 74.
[782] Interview with Eric Carbonara (Philadelphia, July 16, 2009).

Here, the Bush years are remembered as a time of frustration, though not necessarily total passivity. A "political climate" is invoked of individualized micropolitics, but also of interest in the environment. While such comments don't necessarily constitute an outright endorsement of the Democratic Party's politics, Republican politics are seen as culturally detrimental. Again referencing the Bush years, Carbonara later adds that

> we've suffered through more than eight years of shit (MS laughs) and horribleness, and we're at the cusp of something really great, and, Americans, not just musicians, but Americans have to come out of their apathy, and, really look within themselves for a deeper meaning to their lives and, look within themselves on what they can do to improve themselves and improve their culture and improve their society[783]

According to Sharon Cheslow,

> 2004 and 2005 were (MS: Yeah), sort of the best years in terms of this (MS: And…)… energy coming together, and I think by 2006 and 2007 it kind of died down a little bit, and I think partly it's because people were really excited around 2004 (MS: Yeah), thinking that we were gonna defeat Bush (MS: Mhm, OK), and when he, we didn't (MS laughs), people got really depressed, and people felt that, what they did didn't matter, it's like, "what's the use of really trying", so I think people stepped back and reevaluated things a little bit[784]

Here, Cheslow – whose work, as I mentioned already, is more dedicated to emancipatory politics (though not necessarily outright determined politics) than others' – explicitly connects the improvised / noise music scenes she moved through to political developments. Maybe the reevaluation she mentions is comparable to the being fed-up that Eric Carbonara observed? At the same time, this arguably clashes with Britt Brown's observations on increased political activity after Bush's re-election, even though it seems likely that Cheslow's musical-social surroundings overlap more with Brown's than with Carbonara's, Yellow Swans being one of the most obvious examples for such overlap. Interestingly, David Stubbs, reviewing Pelt's untitled album (2005) in terms of a reclaimed Americana, argued that "the free folk movement" had been growing since the mid-nineties. "Back in that pre-Bush era of economic fair weather and 'end of history' relative tranquility, there may have appeared to some to be little need for such obscurest disaffection." But in the mid-2000s, "with a grimly efficient mediocracy having taken a vicelike grip on all the levers of contemporary culture",

[783] Ibid.. Also see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 101, for a discussion of Carbonara's trajectory and politics.
[784] Interview with Sharon Cheslow (San Francisco, July 24, 2009).

these musics appear much more powerful, not just in their (supposed) tendency towars the rural but in their opening up of "mental space"[785].

Ron Schneiderman talks about "resisting controls", but then questions that phrase, suggesting that rather he is interested in an "in-action", in "trying to create some sort of demonstration that can inspire […] whoever is witnessing or observing, […] something that can bring a sense of 'I need to express my freedom'". This is connected to "the interest of dismantling paternity, the paternal order"[786]. Further referring to that question of paternity and discussing the "didactic kind of cultural imaging that's going on (MS: Yeah), that is rampant", Schneiderman compares a strict right-wing father with a more liberal left-wing father. While there are obvious differences between those two, they personify the same structure: "we're still pursuing something that has a basis in looking for approval […]". In addition, he considers "leaders of a country" or presidents to be "archaic" elements: "we don't need that any longer". And yet, "then again, we need to stay united somehow and people need that thing to hold on to, so it kinda goes deep you know, it's a very deep situation, we're in it"[787]. Beyond the breaking up or subversion of a dichotomy between the oppressor and the oppressed, beyond a dubious father / son relationship perpetuated through media, the depth of such situations is exceedingly hard to penetrate, the situations are difficult to change. Power acting on an immanent level is difficult to challenge, and the combinations of types of power necessitate the constant renewal and recombination of tools. This is, of course, particularly difficult when one's surroundings appear uneager to engage on such a level, having shed the shackles of more obvious and overt, less subtle forms of power. Christina Carter's email with responses to my new questions emphasizes music scenes' rapidly changing modes of functioning:

> The past five years, I would say, have changed the whole nature of the enterprise. I am still trying to discover within myself how to respond. How to continue, or not continue, making music with the feeling of satisfaction that I have reacted according to my best nature, my most true nature. What comes to mind is how complex it is, how alienated I feel, how when you read what I have to write you will think it is exaggerated. The vacuousness of music culture and everything involving it: musicians, listeners, writers, critics, promoters, etc. makes me sickened.[788]

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[785] Stubbs, David: Pelt. Untitled, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Modern Music* 258 (August 2005), 54.
[786] Interview with Ron Schneiderman (Brattleboro, July 13, 2009). The bits included in this paragraph thus far were already quoted at greater length in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 185–186.
[787] Interview with Ron Schneiderman (Brattleboro, July 13, 2009).
[788] Personal email correspondence with Christina Carter (December 21, 2012).

Carter decries the underground's corruption through "the 'values' of valuelessness": "Yes, it is materialism and consumer culture but it has finally exceeded the limits of the container of humanity." Whereas for Carter, 'art' implies "concepts of transformation toward being more fully human", recent tendencies towards superficiality ("there is no caring") rather imply that "art seems to mean transformation towards product." This has political-historical implications: "I see an immense failure to the point where I do not think that there is an underground anymore, and because of its re-definition, it will seem now as if there was never an underground." In this "field where there is no penetration: it is all flatness", her own work's "political aims that are psychological and social in nature" are easy to misinterpret or simply neglect. The same, arguably, goes for other utterances of hers: "I have said more explicit things in interviews that have been edited out..."[789]

Carter wrestles with the question of how to follow up her anger and disillusionment, between wanting "to do some work that makes a real difference" – and "go[ing] back inside" where she "expect[s] to do nothing, accomplish nothing, and realize I am essentially on my own, in the midst of nothing." [790]

Asked about topics alluded to in earlier discussions and mails, Carter states that

> the issue of survival has been decided. One cannot make music now on any regularly sustainable way that brings it out into a wider community without already having money. It is a rich musician's game now... Gender... the women were there who valued their power as artists. Now these women have gone back to valuing their power as objects. They can survive as objects because they already have the means (money) to freely revel in being treated as objects. To them, they choose to be objects therefore, no problem. It is a game to be an object. But, when as a woman you have wanted to escape not choosing to be an object but having been forced to be an object... And see power in coming from how you can use your humanity... The whole music world is like the worst of pornography, sanitized even of its sanitized fear, pain, loneliness and rejection... These people now do not even have anything to escape...[791]

While "fantasies of power and loss of power" are constructed, actual power relations aren't interrogated. In Carter's eyes, music has become a commercial "for what is euphemistically called 'lifestyle'"[792], being a spokesperson for which is now the expected / standard mode of practice.

What appears to have gone awry in the music world according to Carter's view is, among other things, a question of what matters, and why. Whereas her own music is

[789] Ibid.
[790] Ibid.
[791] Ibid.
[792] Ibid.

infused with impulses that matter on a micropolitical level, the general atmosphere doesn't appear to condone or even be interested in such a 'mattering' of music that goes beyond a vague pluralism oriented towards (instant) gratification. With the interests of musical-social fields turning 'flat', there is nothing at stake any more. And this isn't a positive, happy 'end of history'; rather, it is joined by ignorance and maybe some of the laziness that Zimmerman detects in the doomed San Francisco counterculture. What the countercultural carnival[793] was to that scene, the indistinct carnival of capitalist realism may be to such scenes as the ones discussed here. I am sure much has been written already about the (im-)possibilities of undergrounds nowadays; and Simon Reynolds suggests that "[t]he avant-garde is now an arrière-garde", implying that those once expected to be modernists are now "the group who are most addicted to the past."[794] Also, in follow-up essay to *Retromania*, Reynolds argues that the proliferation of DIY turns it into "a pastime, a hobby" devoid of "its ethical and political charge"[795]. But what to do? An inner exile, an internal dropping out may seem tempting and in many ways healthiest on the personal level if the 'scene' appears so hopeless (I am also encountering echoes of Natalie Mering's stories here). But doing nothing certainly may constitute submission.[796] Reconnections on less densely populated underground levels to form a new, or counter-underground may be another option but, of course, risk their own forms of exclusion.[797] I am not sure my own writing here can go far beyond pleas for political-affective reinvestments of such musics.[798] At the very least, calls for disruption and challenge of the status quo of capitalist realism (or otherwise) will have to be reiterated and renewed. They will have to be radical, but they shouldn't lack pragmatism; and they should be able to connect to wider political / social / cultural issues, ideally organized into a strategy.[799]

Carter's email is one of numerous examples of the importance that ideas of honest human expression can have in these scenes. To what extent this expression is actually

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[793] cf. Zimmerman: *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*, 170–175.
[794] Reynolds: *Retromania*, xx.
[795] Reynolds, Simon: Excess all areas, in: *The Wire. Adventures in Modern Music* 328 (June 2011), 33.
[796] cf. Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 187.
[797] One aspect of these scenes that I may have mostly overlooked thus far, discussing the scenes in their positivity, is what Keenan calls these musicians' "dedicat[ion] to finding their own voice and creating art as free from outside influence as possible." (Keenan: The Fire Down Below, 34.) This, however, seems to contradict the openness so important to these scenes, though I think it isn't necessarily an unresolvable contradiction. Stay open, protect your own work / imagination (within your scenes of support)? Think global, act local?
[798] A further theorization of this would, once again, have to take Grossberg's *We Gotta Get out of This Place* into account.
[799] cf. Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 225–226.

conceived as 'pure' or referring to a 'pure', essential subject is hard to tell – often enough, as the many examples in my theses have shown, the actual musics are far from reducible to any notion of classic authorship. Talking about her earliest experiences contributing to a music group, Eva Saelens reflects that

> a lot of people find free music to be very annoying, but I think for me if I would have, people asked me to play music and I went to play and it was, let's say an indie rock ensemble, I would have never become a musician because, I've never had the kind of discipline to conform to a genre like that, or I just don't have the artistic mind to conform like that, but for me, being invited to play with a group of people who were *so* eccentrically spirited, it was, it was such a lucky break for me because it immediately put me on a bold and confident track to being, to being just completely myself in expression, and I feel really lucky for that[800]

While in Germany, Spencer Clark encountered a new school of "electro-acoustic, post-AMM, improvisation" that didn't appeal to him at all:

> I was really really turned off by it, and I don't think it's that bad but I, I thought that if I was gonna make music and at that same time I was thinking about making music because, photography wasn't enough, I was like, whatever I'll do will be like a reaction against that in a way, will be more physical (MS: Yeah, yeah) and, and intuitive rather than like, some sort of language that you think you've developed in school that is somehow anything other than intuitive […][801]

While he doesn't want to impose his interpretation on the group, he says that to him, its practice "seemed like a good way to kill the idea of expression"[802]. Thus, it seems, the imagination so important to Clark's work would presumably be inhibited. This opportunity for expression – which needn't equal signification – is in many ways enabled by these scenes' joyous mutual support. I want to refer back here to the structures of care and support so crucial to the first thesis's conclusions[803], with Paul LaBrecque stating that "we all support each other, no matter what the other person does, and there's this kind of comfort when we all get together or when we're all in the same room, whether it's like three or four of us or, or 50 of us like this, that we're not being judged by anybody else", and those others "do nothing but push you to do bigger and better things, and their energy interacts with yours and makes you wanna do bigger and better things"[804]. The connections between these musicians are based on like-

[800] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[801] Interview with Spencer Clark (Graz, June 26, 2009).
[802] Ibid.
[803] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 189–205.
[804] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009). These quotes were already included in Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 133.

mindedness and friendship, and are among these scenes' greatest strengths. But isn't there a danger of connecting only with those of a like mind?[805]

Is opening to other scenes or demographic areas an option for these scenes? Talking to me about the heterogeneous social connections I have been tracing with these theses, Matt Valentine says he

> think[s] people equilibrate on the street, even though you might go out of touch, eventually if your interests are the same and you're, and that's where you belong, you do come back together and you come in contact again, and some people just fall away[806]

In some ways, this equilibrating is what enables the care and mutual support so crucial to these scenes; and certainly, Valentine is well aware of the importance, even the constitutive function of openness[807] for these scenes. But then, there is the question of whether it is possible for such scenes to actually reach out. Having talked about how "middle class, white, straight, dudes"[808] tend to be the (economically privileged) norm in such scenes, Britt Brown says that

> I think most people think it's rad when there's people of other races or sexualities involved with this kind of music because *mostly* people really want just more and more people to be involved and they don't wanna feel like, "oh I'm making limited cassettes for 50 other white guys who look exactly like me and have (MS laughs) beards and tie-dye t-shirts and like all the same shit I like." That's fine but you also want to feel like this is the world, not some stupid privileged bubble. So I think everyone's really pro that. It's just a more tentative thing for some other types of people to get into.[809]

Not only is such a plurality desirable in general, it might also be necessary for the type of strategic thinking that might be necessary for such an underground, if it is interested in actual opposition, to work towards. Gilbert argues that a lack of such thought is quite characteristic to artists, intellectuals and even the anti-capitalist movement; their inventions then are easily appropriated by capital. With Gilbert, it should be noted here that his program isn't dogmatically anticapitalist, as I think other examples in this thesis have already implied (and Gilbert himself, via Lawrence Grossberg, questions the use of 'anticapitalism' as a movement name). Rather, the paradigm of neoliberalism in

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[805] cf. Gilbert: Anticapitalism and Culture, 197.
[806] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[807] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 101.
[808] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009). This is one of the quotes already cited in my first thesis. cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 103.
[809] Interview with Britt Brown (Los Angeles, July 26, 2009) + clarification edit via personal email correspondence with Britt Brown (January 11, 2013).

particular is attacked in his book.[810] Based on the examples of opposition to 'Corporate America' and commercialization encountered thus far, there is no reason inherent to these scenes why many of its protagonists shouldn't fit into a heterogeneous, rhizomatic, ever-shifting partisan alliance[811] eager to oppose the developments associated with capitalist realism or neoliberal politics / economics. But then, there is no inherent reason why they truly should. This leaves the subject open to further deliberation that would need to be context-specific. Some people's reasons for their neglect of strategic thought as written about by Gilbert might be related to the problematic question of leadership (indeed, I am feeling thoroughly uncomfortable discussing it here). In fields like those discussed here, maybe the death of the composer should also bring with itself the death of the leader; but again, post-Cagean times aren't characterized by a universalization of specific aesthetico-political tropes but by challenges.[812] Gilbert is staunchly anti-authoritarian but invokes leadership in his discussion of strategy. "Leadership so conceived does not necessarily imply the imposition of a singular will on others but any process by which the *direction of travel* of a group or individual is influenced."[813] These musical undergrounds certainly aren't free of such elements either. In musical terms, Samara Lubelski has talked about the shifts between the free and the individual vision (though politically, as mentioned earlier, the desire to influence isn't present). Saelens, too, mentions 'leaders' in a discussion of the financial and intellectual privilege some artists grew up with and that infuses their creative trajectories:

> I mean, maybe that's why they're leaders, because they were endowed with that by their parents at a really young age and that, they can help lead us, and remind us that we don't have to be hung up on […] concepts of wealth, or concepts of stability and stuff[814]

In a sense, many of the musicians cited here can be leaders, too – in that their examples of artistic practice inspire others, make space for others, consciously, unconsciously, thus actually matching creative individualism as encountered here in complex manifestations.

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[810] cf. Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 130–133.
[811] cf. ibid., 229–232.
[812] cf. Hegarty*: Noise/Music*, 91.
[813] Ibid., 220. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[814] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).

When Paul LaBrecque got deeper into playing music at the age of 30, "this kind of gentle path opened up", and musical practice became an "outlet"[815]. This points towards a role beyond 'mere' artistic interest that such musics have – not just for LaBrecque. I have mentioned that music and (personal) philosophy are intertwined for many of these musicians; and that the social, that mutual care and support can be constitutive for such scenes is one of the main ideas traversing my project. There is a strongly internalized articulation of personal expression, personal truth, personal well-being, all considered within the social, to such musical practice. This is genuinely beautiful, but can further steps be taken? Earlier, I have quoted Gabriel Saloman, pointing out the specific position he sees for the arts in his concept of 'Psychedelic Anarchism'. Eva Saelens, too, thinks about harnessing such creativity for a decidedly political cultural project:

> I really feel that we have the power to invent an alternative, community, that allows us to rethink our relationship with the marketplace by recognizing that we're innovative people who dream of a better life and who are really intelligent enough to actualize it, and not only do we, should we do that because our survival depends on it but because, our conscience calls for it[816]

She considers these DIY underground activities "psychotherapeutic" and, as quoted in *Gender construction* already[817], relates them to what could be considered a structure of feeling:

> I feel like there, in these abstract ways, in these very honest ways, the musicians of America on these small scales are communicating this, erm, spiritual complexion that would be utterly vaporized if it wasn't for our efforts at documenting it, yeah, I just think about people around the world that hate America, but crave it at the same time, they crave it because of how cool it seems, but they hate it for how we suck the resources away and for how we are so judgmental and condemning of people who are so poor and so fucked and trying so hard, and I just really feel that these small movements of music are really efforts at letting people, helping people understand each other and, because the channels of bureaucracy are really like making apocalypse imminent[818]

However, she is aware that these potentialities often remain unactualized: "creating alternative lifestyles means creating lives, not art, and a lot of artists have problems with life"[819], problems in their relations to other people, problems that Saelens says sometimes manifest as alcoholism. These scenes aren't necessarily entirely *healthy* (although many musicians appear to be very interested in various questions of health), they certainly aren't constituted by individuals whose authority and stability is given.

[815] Interview with Labanna Bly and Paul LaBrecque (Graz, June 27, 2009).
[816] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009). Also see Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 102, for a discussion and contextualization of related comments.
[817] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 185.
[818] Interview with Eva Saelens (Oakland, July 21, 2009).
[819] Ibid.

Articulation to politics cannot just be imposed on or expected from them all; again, there is nothing inherent to these musics that *must* result in such a progressive articulation. But at the same time, these scenes' fragile benefits are enjoyed by many musicians – and wouldn't it be most interesting to spread such unhurriedness, especially in the face of capitalist realism's ubiquity?

The more often a connection between expression, well-being, these musics and a more general, public, political drive towards emancipation / against exploitation and delimiting 'negative feedback' is forged, the greater is the chance that such undergrounds, or at least such scenes, may matter through their oppositional, political force (best channeled through articulation to other emancipatory trajectories) rather than 'only' (and still crucially) on the smaller, though certainly noble, level of mutually supported personal expression. I think this chapter has presented a variety of utterances showing that discontent in many cases exceeds a distrust of or opposition to sovereign power, strong as that may be. In most cases, these musics probably aren't directly inspired by politics, but references to a structure of feeling (preferable to Harker's references to a *zeitgeist*, I would say) might help contextualize such musical-social relations historically, showing their (sometime) relation to, for example, climates of fear "live during war crimes"[820], or testing Diederichsen's connection of collective practice and what might be considered capitalist realism's perspective according to which "[a]ll that is real is the individual (and their families)"[821] as applied to the music business. Many of the intriguing tactics found here were there before these musicians' accumulations actually emerged; sometimes they were inspired politically, at other times certainly less so. In addition, as Zimmerman has shown and as Gridley has suggested, sometimes it is just very easy (and sensational) to construct dubious relations between innovative musics and contemporary politics; and of course, many of the questions leading to the answers compared in this chapter explicitly sought out political views and practice. However, even in their partial (relative) passivity, they manifest political awareness and present enough reasons for a more expansive study for which I would argue a Grossbergian cartography would have to be a major reference.

Somewhat comparable to the ideas laid out in my theory and methodology chapters and in *Gender construction*'s conclusion is Matt Valentine's call for constant "evaluation" –

[820] The title of a series of releases by Yellow Swans, cf. for example DOVE YELLOW SWANS - LIVE DURING WAR CRIMES 3 CD (RTB#38), in: RTB Records. http://www.releasethebats.com/rtb38.html. Last accessed: January 30, 2013.

[821] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 77.

otherwise, there is the danger that "simple machines go wrong"[822]. I can only support this – although sometimes, simple as well as more complex machines might *have* to be broken, sabotaged or jammed[823] – not through violence, which I oppose just as much as I think quite a few musicians here do, but through conscious and eager, creative and collective challenging of perceptions and material structures and strictures on multiple levels.

[822] Interview with Matt Valentine (Brattleboro, July 12, 2009).
[823] cf. Deleuze: Postscript, 6.

6 Conclusion

In this last chapter, I will revisit the thesis's various strands of inquiry and try to tie up loose ends while previewing possible future projects.

6.1 Joy-shaping your articulations

I started this new thesis with a review of my path thus far and cannot claim I know where to go next… yet. Similar things might be said about the actual field of research, or really anything: to make predictions seems like a gamble, but this might be a hideously adequate yet unsustainable form of tactics (indeed, not strategy) in a society whose power relations are so often based on debt. In comparison to *Gender construction*, *Politics and American 'Free Folk' music(s)* appears more pessimistic, or more deeply insecure. This might be related to its own more hurried genesis and its more fragile structure: always threatening to disintegrate, crystal splinters of theory and anecdote and enthusiasm and warning all over the place. I will now retrace some of the manifold strands made obvious in this paper and hope to recombine them into 1. concepts that will be of interest to readers and practitioners in the field, maybe kickstarting the odd idea, and 2. implications for my own larger project and its continuation in the near and not-too-distant future.

At this paper's beginning, I compared and differentiated and connected my two theses. I believe that I have managed to distinguish this new paper more than noticeably from its predecessor on whose foundations it was built. I think my (and hopefully the readers', your) understanding of the field of research has increased or at least become more dense: various forms of power relations have been made obvious in ways that *Gender construction* couldn't, just as this new thesis is unable to repeat or integrate all of *Gender construction*'s qualities. The social relations that constitute these scenes remained present – had to remain present! – but in the background, only rarely emphasized. And nowhere in my new thesis were power relations described so densely as they had been in my first thesis's tracing of their genderedness and social genesis / embeddedness. Simultaneously, certain thematic fields were accessed that the first text only hinted at; and the higher level of speculation encountered at times has benefits of its own if handled carefully. Even the most tentative of results can be harnessed in future writing, contextualized and interrogated adequately and tested as to its relative

merits. Not that everything found in this paper is exceedingly 'tentative' or 'speculative': much hard work went into the amassing of material and ideas, although some of it will only pay off in the long run. I am glad to have a better overview of available materials on these scenes, to have recuperated some sources that I had been aware of but that had to be neglected when I completed my first thesis, and – most immediately satisfying – to have faced and worked on music-related concepts that I had been aware of but hadn't found a place for in *Gender construction*. This includes Branden W. Joseph's work beyond the concept of 'minor history' (which itself is more crucial to my project than ever), Jeremy Gilbert's writings beyond the (not quite) isolated ideas harnessed in my first thesis and Bruce Russell's thought-provoking writings on free music, which might be hard to tackle for me due to very basic differences in theoretical background but which never fail to inspire.

I hardly changed my first thesis's theoretical and methodological framework. Those concepts more explicitly related to gender theory were less central to the new thesis, but I believe their lessons were integrated into my overall approach to this thesis, which recognizes gender as an important and integral aspect of power relations in these fields. The minor cultural sociology developed in *Gender construction* here tilted closer to minor history as presented by Branden W. Joseph, the concept in analogy to which it had originally been fleshed out. Referring back to Michel Foucault, Christina Lutter and Markus Reisenleitner as well as Meaghan Morris, I have conceptualized history as fragmentary and not just the designation of a linear, predetermined (or post-determined) series of events or processes. Connections therein are to be seen as specific, but they require contextualization and an analysis of power relations. Lessons learned from Joseph's *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* bolster the rhizomatic model for these local, trans-local and virtual scenes developed via Deleuze and Guattari as well as Bennett and Peterson. These scenes' heterogeneous, sometimes disjointed character probably manifested more obviously in this thesis as my elaborations on group structures and psychedelic aesthetics don't necessarily apply to all the interviewed. Instead, I have presented a selection of specific artistic / social practices, not all of which are found throughout these scenes – and if they are, musicians' individual approaches are bound to differ, as are their specific local contexts. And yet, the density of these "specific networks and connections" allows for an investigation into these heterogeneous, dynamic scenes within a single thesis / project if the connections remain traceable. It

might be easier to encounter such density among artists who have been active for two decades already; what densities, what expansions and contractions will be found among younger generations remains to be seen. There is great diversification in the underground, or what used to be seen as the underground, and whether connections are upheld is a question of economic / cultural contexts as well as personal relations' stability.

Meanwhile, the qualitative / problem-centered interviews I conducted for my first diploma thesis remained a solid basis for this second thesis's construction. The theses' specific topics and research questions differed, but the field of research remained the same, notionally (and yet didn't, due to its rapid and nature-changing shifts) and the original interviews' structures allowed for (reflected) application of other research questions. Their narrative parts remained relatively open: interviewees (usually) narrated their stories of moving through these scenes, of connection to other protagonists. It would certainly be absurd to claim that the first thesis's specific research topic, the question of gender construction and gender relations in such scenes, didn't impact these narrative parts (indeed, they quite obviously did so in some of the most successful interviews' cases). However, the dense web constructed through these interviews and their analysis is very open to connections with other research projects as well as to intensifying impulses, both of which I hope to have introduced in my new thesis. Additional (quasi-)interview material was introduced through the sending of a variety of thesis-specific questions per mail, replies to which can be considered the backbone of my thesis's last main chapter. Email replies differ in kind from qualitative interviews such as the ones I led, no doubt; but I think reflection on these differences and the fact that I received these replies from actual interviewees (and thus people I had already spoken to at length about their specific trajectories) enables or helps their connectability and usefulness for my new thesis.

This thesis's main chapters received their chief impulses from a variety of key texts, although their respective impacts varied just as much as their contents. Branden W. Joseph's *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* follows Tony Conrad's trajectory not in order to write a monumental biography but to trace certain fields' tackling of John Cage's legacy and artistic engagement with or modelling of power relations. I first introduced a subchapter that brought up a variety of options for the writing of such scenes' history: I applied *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* on numerous levels – not surprisingly so,

considering its own integration of theory and practice / empiricism. Sometimes, connections were obvious and easily made, sometimes, numerous levels had to be bridged – not the most pragmatic approach, but I think some interesting points were made. My survey of potential and actual free folk histories was far from complete but was nonetheless multi-faceted, hinting at the temporal aspect of these scenes' accumulation. A variety of (counter-)rock and folk histories were presented, appreciated for their introduction of diverse concepts, their collection of interesting and rare materials and their own explicit as well as implicit challenging of mainstream histories, but were also warned of the danger of constructing a major history according to constants. Statements on these scenes' approaches towards past musics were noted – approaches that are unstable due to ever-increasing access to more and more musics and tools (and, no doubt, economic shifts). These changes also destabilize any (already unstable) notion of one coherent scene or genre. Indeed, various histories can be written, discourses may be re-initiated… it is a (minor) historian's task to handle these, not to verify their truth, but to pragmatically engage with them, to put the tracing back on the map and check its adequacy and openness.

As I applied the contents of Joseph's book to my theses' scenes, it was obvious that my own more sociologically related approach differs from his. However I attempted to engage productively and positively with that discrepancy in levels of analysis. While close analysis of their musics would require the application of a set of skills that I wasn't ready to include in this thesis, presenting the example of groups like Jackie-O Motherfucker, No-Neck Blues Band or Sunburned Hand Of The Man, their sprawling structures and aesthetics enabled the construction of a variety of theses and conclusions. It seems particularly important and interesting to me that many of the concepts and impulses grappled with by John Cage and artists attempting to deal with is legacy appear to have been internalized to some extent by artists in these scenes. This is a very tentative conclusion. There is a gap of numerous decades between the fields Joseph writes about and the ones I have been tracing, and the specific forms of dissemination of such Cagean or post-Cagean concepts haven't been theorized, although some aspects have been alluded to (through stories of interviewees' 'discovery' of writings on and recordings by such artists, and through Bruce Russell's short history of free music). However, what can be said is that the activities of psychedelic / drone / noise underground musicians in the USA over the last two decades involved an interest in (seemingly) non-musical sounds, an at least implicit questioning and dismantling or

sheer disregard of hierarchies in musical-social fields and an implicit connection of aesthetics and politics / philosophy. The contexts in which the 'natural turn' and 'social turn' developed were different to those in which these recent scenes are active, but maybe that is the point: David Keenan's suggestion that these musics are (experimental) improvised ones that are now being performed on a folk level, DIY-style among friends, is probably strengthened by this thesis's ideas.

The different 'worlds' manifested by musicians in these scenes, maybe most explicitly among artists associated with what Keenan has called 'Hypnagogic pop', are a fascinating but hard to (politically) grasp aspect of these underground scenes' aesthetics. While they can be conceptualized as helping discovery of the self (and I am sure they have such or similarly healthy impacts on specific musicians), thus also furthering communication with others, they may also be seen as examples of the multi-level affective and imaginative impact music can have, not least as (not explicitly politicized) instances of 'possible worlds'. These may remain unharnessed fantasies, but a multiplicitous, decidedly social and oppositional strategy very much designed to allow for the proliferation of further fantasies and egalitarian pleasure may be able to open up such personalized universes and pit them forcefully against societal-political rigidities.

Joseph's minor history shows how, at a specific time, artists dealt with different forms of power. Power, here, isn't conceived as something that simply exists but rather as extant in relations. Depending on the context, power may be discussed in terms of transcendence or immanence; Joseph distinguishes between sovereign, disciplinary and control types of power, and his study's protagonists tackled these in very varied ways. Similarly, it is hard to generalize 'free folk' artists' aesthetic and social take on and involvement in power relations. While the very existence of such generally ahierarchic scenes implies an evasion, subversion or even dismantling of hierarchic, sovereign forms of power, disciplinary aspects are harder to grasp already. Tracing these DIY scenes' non-institutionalized workings and the specific discipline needed to uphold these can form one line of inquiry, as does Eric Carbonara's individualized (yet certainly socially embedded) trajectory of highly disciplined solo acoustic instrumentalism, which (especially in its connection to like-minded artists' trajectories, and depending on further research and theorizing) might even be conceived as a very specific form of 'counter-conduct' that doesn't necessarily lead to liberation but proposes an alternate mode of leading a socially aware artistic life.

Control, meanwhile, remains hardest to tackle in its very un-obviousness. A consideration of the aesthetics and tools and skills developed by musicians in these scenes led me to the realization or claim that they are in a good position to engage in practice similarly powerful to that of artists like Tony Conrad or Throbbing Gristle: on the dronier, noisier side of the spectrum, the psychedelic "multimedia sensory overload" of Throbbing Gristle's concerts or Conrad's *The Flicker*, and thus activities geared towards the changing of perception, are never too far away. Indeed, if Conrad's multiplicitous trajectories and rigidly precise thought and Throbbing Gristle's attacks on categorization even beyond the aesthetic are taken into consideration, models of multi-leveled emancipatory practice might be at hand. However, temporal and spatial contexts differ vastly, and the critical element still more present in Throbbing Gristle's and Tony Conrad's respective cases might be missing in large parts of the psychedelic underground at the moment. The question to pose might be how to align these recent artists' musical practice and the skills found therein to practices explicitly interested in counter-control or generally emancipatory politics.

Nadya Zimmerman's *Counterculture Kaleidoscope* switches the levels at which the San Francisco counterculture is discussed from one assessing its oppositional success to one that locates it in a state of attempted but contradictory dropping-out, pluralist rather than oppositional. While Zimmerman's account is a useful corrective to any political glorification of the counterculture, my own approach once again operated on quite different levels. I left out in-depth, politically inspired analyses of actual musical examples. Instead of focusing on the exposure of contradictions in these scenes and in awareness of the vast contextual differences (despite some similarities) between the San Francisco counterculture and my theses' musical-social fields, I attempted to continue tracing the productive, potentially political aspects of free music / improvisation and psychedelic elements therein and added an investigation of such psychedelic underground musics' relationship to contemporary capitalism. One notable theme is that of the 'outlaw stances' Keenan considers important: they can be connected to the countercultural 'outlaw persona' as delineated by Zimmerman, suggesting a potential for rather than (necessarily) actual practice of delinquency. In both cases, it is also a musical law that is questioned, but Keenan puts greater emphasis on this, praising 'illegitimate media' (comparable to the first thesis's interest in 'minor' approaches to

music[824]) whose use grants the musician control over her / his work. A DIY ethos, involving mutual support, opposes or at least grants alternatives to the mainstream culture whose workings and impact are seen as negative, detrimental, even oppressive. What could be seen as exoticism is present in these scenes but potentially connected to an opening-up; here, further investigation is necessary. Meanwhile, *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*'s chapter on the 'natural persona' leads to investigations of psychedelia and (again) improvisation: in addition to Zimmerman's own book, this chapter was further shaped by texts by Jeremy Gilbert, whose own work is situated at intersections similar to the ones I roam, and Bruce Russell. Their respective elaborations on the benefits of improvisation in music are only partially compatible, but both are decidedly political. Gilbert's Deleuzian approach emphasizes and strengthens the anti-hierarchic aspects of 'improvisationality', claiming specific musics opening to the cosmos as 'postmodern' musics, not constituted by lack. His elaborations fit many of the musics in the 'free folk' / underground scenes examined here. Russell's rigid and unimpeachably political writing confirms the presence of many of the aesthetico-political (post-)Cagean aspects invoked in the preceding chapter; what he calls 'improvised sound work' is harnessed within a situationist framework, tackling the oppressive presence of late capitalism's spectacle on levels of form, interaction, space, time and more. Through Gilbert's writings on *Anticapitalism and Culture*, I articulated these benefits of improvised musics – and this includes the tactics proposed by Russell – to broader political projects. Russell's situationist approach to 'improvised sound work' is inventive and inspiring, but a reading of Gilbert's synthetic discussion of cultural studies' relation to political activism suggests that it is a type of approach best combined with others and harnessed into a strategy that may be more politically powerful.

Generally, while some of Zimmerman's thoughts on the counterculture's naturalization of technology may be applied to these scenes at least in places, I don't think the relationship between artists, technology and capitalism is quite the same here – it can't be, considering the massive shifts in contexts. Sure, some musicians' practice and lives appear particularly nature-oriented despite their musics' reliance on technology, but their relationship to and presentation of the technology used appears more open than what is portrayed in *Counterculture Kaleidoscope*. Thankfully, the sexist 'free love' double-standard exposed in Zimmerman's chapter on the 'new age persona' doesn't

[824] cf. Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 116–129, 193–195.

appear to be nearly as present in these scenes, although frustrating rigidities remain (and new ones might be appearing, as suggested by Natalie Mering in a later chapter). Psychedelic and spiritual elements are traceable; I mostly discussed the former through an appreciation and critique of Yellow Swans' / Gabriel Saloman's 'Psychedelic anarchism', an intriguing concept that I think might be best approached, however, through a more materialist stance on the changing of perception and expansion of minds, inspired by Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari and Manuel De Landa.

More recent texts by Gilbert tackle the question of scenes' survival and politics at a time of crisis in capitalism, a topic very relevant to this thesis, not least due to Zimmerman's interesting claims that the counterculture disintegrated due to its own contradictions in relation to a capitalist mainstream society which it attempted to drop out of but remained connected to. Contrasting David Keenan's insistence that such scenes aren't anticapitalist but rather attempt to find a voice in the marketplace with Gilbert's take, which suggests that such scenes engage in commerce[825] but not necessarily in capital accumulation, I traced some of the opportunities and dangers such DIY-based musical-social fields face. While Keenan's advocating of a DIY-based, empowering, autonomous (neither based on commercialization nor made dependent on state support) economy is important and inspiring on many levels, there is reason to think that such economies and aesthetics are always in danger of appropriation, recuperation or even precorporation. Not only do such scenes need to attempt to remain staunchly un-categorizable, they will also have to stay more than up to date when it comes to the invention of communal modes of commerce that help sustain such autonomous and experimental musical practice. Alternatively, or in addition, one might argue via Marcus Boon that the actual aim needs to be an expansion of the very freedoms often perceived as threatening (notably the free availability of music anywhere, anytime) to other areas of society, or really to any part of the world, a utopian invocation of music scenes' and music technology's pioneering power.

The last of my main chapters received impulses from Mark Gridley's criticism of jazz historians' emphasis on or construction of links between free jazz and the civil rights movement, as well as from Brian Harker's response. Pointing out analytical shortcomings in such linkages (on numerous levels – context, aesthetics, chronology, artists' individual styles and approaches, writers' projections…), Gridley goes as far as

[825] Gilbert: Capitalism, creativity and the crisis.

to suggest that jazz history could be taught without simultaneous elaboration of socio-political historical contexts so as not to confuse students' outlook on jazz history. Harker accuses Gridley of fighting a straw man and argues for a context-aware jazz history. How can 'free folk' be described in, or linked to, explicitly political terms? I presented ideas from a variety of texts that see these scenes (especially as they manifested and accumulated in the mid-2000s) as a "spiritual community of values" fostering a collectivity and creativity that's opposed to 'Corporate America' and a (neo-) conservative articulation of politics and society. Artistic collaboration, mutual care, a DIY ethos and a great musical or sonic openness opposing repressive or at least hegemonic form are combined into an alternative model of musical-social practice. But the actual chances of such an assemblage's 'success' are hard to delineate. Interviewees' remarks, both in the original interviews and in recent emails, are quite varied, show political awareness though not always political activity. Generally, such musicians are assumed to be tending towards left-wing / liberal ideas; while it is dangerous to assume an inherent connection between such musics and such thought, the material I collected generally doesn't contradict this, at least in my interviewees' cases. Of course, 'liberal' and 'left-wing' both are extremely broad terms whose actual manifestations in specific thought and in political activity (or non-activity) aren't pre-determined.

Some interviewees and articles offer hints at an articulation of musical history and political history. (Seemingly) individual moments – 9/11 and the politics succeeding it as well as the elections of 2004 and 2008 – appear in interviewees' narratives or statements. How they do isn't pre-determined either, and the extents to which such experiences fed into artistic life differ. In Eric Arn's case, music and political / anti-war engagement were mostly divorced on the level of actual practice; Sharon Cheslow's practice, meanwhile, was and is inspired by political and philosophical questions. Yellow Swans articulated political questions to non-signifying musics. Christina Carter attempted to express a 'spiritual malaise' on the Charalambides album *Likeness*, a non-explicit comment on the perceived and felt climate of years of Republican dominance. It generally appears quite possible that the impact of such atmospheres, or structures of feeling in general, found their way into musical practice. However, this isn't to be seen as the determined, explicit articulation of politics that Gridley claims is hardly to be found in free jazz. Rather, such complex impulses would have to be approached through studies very broad (comparable to Lawrence Grossberg's *We Gotta Get out of This*

Place) or very specific, dealing with individual works (although these too would have to be contextualized in a manner arguably dependent on Grossberg-style contextual work). Recent neoliberal / corporate mainstream culture is a target of criticism in many cases, experienced as stifling and conservative and unjust. It would be interesting to trace compare the perception of varying forms of capitalism, or of social, cultural, economic politics, by such an underground musicians over the years, but this would without doubt turn out to be a particularly expansive undertaking.

As shown by Christina Carter's example, politically aware musicians also grapple with the question of whether or how to consciously work politics into music. The currency of non-signifying, non-representative, 'universal' musics may trump that of explicitly political lyrics or signifiers. I do argue that psychedelia may serve the expansion of minds, the altering of perception and thus (hopefully) the questioning of many a category, but maybe it isn't particularly conducive to more explicit deliberation of political or social issues, at least in these scenes, to protagonists' ears… this is, however, merely a conjecture. Indeed, there is no reason why these musics should resort to political lyricism; however, it is important that people like Sharon Cheslow keep deliberating such questions. Another relevant question to ask here might be why such universality isn't granted to political lyrics. Of course, such texts may be didactic, especially when encountered on an album or in a concert one cannot interfere with. But if an emancipatory project argues for equality, or peace, or solidarity – aren't these values potentially just as universal as any psychedelic aesthetic? These universalities manifest on different levels, and any attempt at politicizing such musics successfully, through written word or performance, must take this into consideration.[826] One idea that is quite present among interviewees is that 'the personal is political', and this ties in with either a certain distrust of or shying away from explicit political work or at least, or maybe more importantly, a belief in the liberatory or emancipatory aspects of certain lifestyles or aesthetics. It could indeed be argued that such a slogan captures the political thrust of these scenes as it was conceptualized in some of the earliest overviews (Keenan, Karnik, Büsser): politics are implied, and they may manifest in the autonomy attempted through DIY production and free aesthetics. But it seems likely that any such scenes can only be politically potent, implicitly or explicitly, if not just reduced to their own (not) isolated example. This is why it is important to not indulge in, for example, the laziness portrayed by Zimmerman (although it is hard to tell

[826] Also see, for example, Grossberg: *We Gotta Get out of This Place*, 79–87, and really the book as a whole.

whether the same forms of laziness as those she encountered in *Counterculture Kaleidoscope* would even be available here). Thus, not only is it important to build one's webs carefully, as Natalie Mering and Eva Saelens have been doing, but also to heed the warnings of protagonists like Mering or Christina Carter. The latter appears gravely disappointed by the underground's development or, maybe, self-dissolution, and her worries about commercialized, dehumanized and simply *flat* music scenes, largely free of appreciation of and care for politics (also the politics of the personal), are reminiscent of 'capitalist realism' as explicitly transposed onto a musical-social level. As in Fisher's examples, the invocation of disruptive, challenging tactics – of which so many of these musicians, not least Carter, are perfectly capable – may be just as necessary as the emergence of a yet-to-construct "collective subject"[827].

Following Jeremy Gilbert, I have argued that such tactics might best be articulated into a strategy, which needn't be a repressive one subsuming all difference; rather, it is a question of alliances and becoming. A certain opening up is definitely required, which may potentially interfere with the protection of one's own aesthetics as diagnosed in these scenes at times, but still shouldn't be confused with an authoritarian imposition of will. The always difficult element of strategic 'leadership' may not be so foreign to these scenes after all, although here, it may appear on a curatorial level, in the example of festivals and concerts that articulate specific political themes to free aesthetics, or in the examples of magazines like *Arthur*, or in the example of such events that construct histories, not least in the context of actually aiming for the future (as in the example of Matt Valentine and Erika Elder's curatorial practice[828]). As Martin Büsser writes[829], numerous bands in these scenes may be considered swarms or packs. This may be said of such scenes as a whole, but groups like Sunburned Hand Of The Man may be thought of this way as well. It is, I think, quite sad that such group formats seem to be on the decline; this is an example of the societal, cultural, economic strictures that make it difficult for non-individualist projects to prevail, and these strictures don't even have to be repressive – they don't even have to be perceived as negative, it's just how life goes sometimes. And members of such groups remain involved in scenes of care and support even when these packs aren't active. But in a society of "[s]eparation, individualisation, alienation"[830], the proliferation of such bands, resisting sovereign power, exploding

[827] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 66.
[828] cf. for example Spiegel: *Gender construction*, 139–140, but also simply consider the Free Folk Festival.
[829] Büsser: Free Folk.
[830] cf. Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 120.

disciplinary enclosures or at least forming their own practical modes of counter-conduct and pitting positive feedback against control could be a far more challenging and powerful example than one might usually expect from music scenes. In their rhizomatic irreducibility, and connectable to the DIY and perception-altering tactics so lauded through this thesis, such groups may well serve as models for unimpeachably, non-identitarian emancipatory politics, psychedelic counter-power war machines[831], never engendering utter freedom but opening up whatever it is they encounter at any given point.

As mentioned during the thesis's theory part, strategies can be considered in terms of becoming. This "always involves a destabilisation of an existent identity and a vector of travel, possibly just a *swerve*, in the direction of something else."[832] Many of these musics are, at their most original and potent, well-described through reference to becoming-animal (Büsser), becoming-music (Gilbert), becoming-woman (*Gender construction*). These shouldn't be considered in identitarian terms: these musics are not essentially about becoming, and becoming is "emphatically *not* a mere process of autarchic self-creation."[833] But through such becomings, such musical practice may model (consciously or unconsciously) 'possible worlds', question rigid ascriptions of identity or implicitly counter negative feedback traversing the body in societies of control. The very use of the term 'model' presents a certain danger, for models are molar[834]. The tracing of such becomings risks reassembling them into instances of identity; the application of strategies has often sabotaged emancipatory projects. The articulation of musics to politics can result in terrible outcomes, but sober and yet complexity-aware approaches must be eager to take such risks.

In a relatively recent review of Karen Dalton's *1966* for *The Wire*, Alex Neilson, himself a musician very active in these scenes, concludes by likening current underground scenes to Dalton's Greenwich Village circles and their "'countrypolitan' mentality" directed against "the brutal anonymity of modern urban living." These recent tendencies include

[831] cf. Deleuze and Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 253. Note that such war machines are not *about* war, which is merely their "abominable residue" (ibid.).
[832] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 222. (Emphasis in the original text.)
[833] Ibid.
[834] cf. Deleuze / Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 315.

> [a] marriage of notions of grassroots community activity, DIY culture, omnivorous musical appetites with covert political implications, dissolution of the boundaries between performer and observer, a privileging of expressive imperatives over technical mastery.[835]

Not only is Neilson's list of underground aspects a refreshing reminder of these scenes' constitution after a lengthy thesis full of references to secondary literature not directly related to these scenes, but it may also serve as a list of "Resource[s] of Hope'[836] as found in a few of Jeremy Gilbert's subchapters. I have discussed earlier that in some ways, politicizing these scenes like I have been doing at times feels wrong. However, Neilson, who certainly knows hot to put the tracing back on the map, here lists a variety of characteristics that *are* perfectly (micro-)political, that are as close as can be to my first thesis's conclusions and that are worth sustaining… and, I think, spreading. Almost closing this chapter, I want to return to Mark Fisher's concept of 'capitalist realism'. One of the things Fisher misses is genuine risk-taking, not least, for example, in (public) television. He argues that

> the most powerful forms of desire are precisely cravings for the strange, the unexpected, the weird. These can only be supplied by artists and media professionals who are prepared to give people something different from that which already satisfies them; by those, that is to say, prepared to take a certain kind of risk.[837]

What are these psychedelic underground scenes' (multi-)media options for greater public dissemination? Natalie Mering has some ideas on the topic:

> I always thought people were gonna get into television, I thought there was gonna be a variety show (MS laughs), I thought there was gonna be, a media onslaught, simply because the nature of the scene itself is so media-oriented, tapes, CDs, putting everything out yourself, art, doing everything yourself, art and, video and things like that and I mean every of the bigger bands I think eventually does have some kind of video thing like, I have a Hanson video with like Nautical Almanac videos and Wolf Eyes vide-, and I know James Ferraro from The Skaters makes videos, there is a lot of the other media going on, I was under the impression it was gonna take on… almost like a pseudo… MTV kind of vibe[838]

Mering feels that there would be greater potential for the scene to make use of the visual formats available, not least through YouTube, but has yet to actualize it – "and maybe that's because a part of it, too, is rejecting media in a way, and maybe some of that stuff can leave a bad taste in people's mouths"[839]. A truly bold articulation could thus involve

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[835] Neilson, Alex: Karen Dalton. 1966, in: *The Wire. Adventures In Sound and Music* 336 (February 2012), 63.
[836] Gilbert: *Anticapitalism and Culture*, 189, 192, 195.
[837] Fisher: *Capitalist Realism*, 76.
[838] Interview with Natalie Mering (Doylestown, July 15, 2009).
[839] Ibid.

such branching out, not just a certainly present openness but an active reaching out and desire to spread these pleasurable old and new weirdnesses – not just for their own (often delightful) sake but, returning to Marrati, to once again "open up the limits of that which presents itself as necessary."

6.2 Future

With its second-order tracings, introduction and discussion of thus far unused materials and references to cultural-theoretical literature as well as literature on past scenes, my new thesis added further dimensions to the cartography of the music scenes in question. Some of these additions may differ in kind from what came before. Such ideas will have to be constantly reflected in future work, not to homogenize the field of research but to assure the project's intellectual cohesion. Generally, I found myself most interested in those moments that allowed me to return to the collected interview (or email) material, and my late return to some of the earliest texts on these scenes, especially David Keenan's 'New Weird America' cover story, felt quite refreshing. Reconsiderations of interview materials always constitute at least a tentative return of the tracing onto the map and seems to result in a strange clarity (though never purity) amidst all the theorizing not directly based on such material. This is, of course, potentially misleading: it isn't possible to simply extract 'the truth' from such material. Context- and complexity-aware analysis is always necessary. But at the very least, I am once again reminded that I want to continue tracing the social relations in these scenes and that I want to constantly tackle my own and others' theorizations thereof with the fact of these fields' sheer complexity and unpredictable dynamics. I hope the generally optimistic outlook present in this thesis (though not without its breaks and gaps) hasn't impeded my ability to generate a critical, inquisitive tracing. An approach like mine that is interested in such fields in their (analytical) positivity is very easily put into question by approaches like Zimmerman's, dedicated and constant tracings of contradictions to the point of general negativity, or by the harsh realities encountered and narrated by some interviewees, realities that make it hard to see beyond dominant, seemingly stable relations of homogenization, exploitation and apathy. But the very existence of such scenes, fragile as they may be, is inspiration enough to further trace their potentials and continue asking how such potentials may be materialized, while taking a stance against rigidities and apathy.

A variety of authors and concepts I had hoped to be able to integrate here is missing or hardly present. Lawrence Grossberg's work remains particularly special and remarkable, and I only want to broadly include it in my own studies once the context feels right. *We Gotta Get out of This Place* seems like such an all-encompassing study of society (which, of course, it can't truly be) that a proper application in the context of my work on such small scenes seemed daunting, but its time will come – maybe soon already. Texts by Martin Büsser, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, Andrea Griesebner, Paul Hegarty, Marc Masters, Gerald Raunig, Simon Reynolds, Joan W. Scott and many others could have been harnessed more forcefully here. Texts by Steve Goodman, Donna Haraway, Nick Land, Alex Ross and Hayden White remained unused or even unread for now. *The Wire*'s vast archive is still underresearched on my part, my not-quite collection of zines only really starts to grow, the Internet is a ridiculous maze of fascinating ideas. My understanding of music 'itself' is still lacking. But I don't mean to harness these omissions as signposts of my thesis's failures; I am actually quite happy with how it has turned out, considering not much time was at hand. Rather, all these authors and publications and skills, and so many more, are options for directions to head into so as to be able to pose more challenging and original and detailed and contextual questions in future texts.

Work on this thesis once again made obvious that I want to continue working in this field of research, and I hope to do so in a more expansive format next time, maybe in the form of a PhD thesis… ideally in the USA? That my new diploma thesis ended up far longer than hoped / expected should be seen as a hint that I will have to search for further 'outlets' – start writing more blog posts, submit articles to periodicals... but maybe most importantly, I am eager to start conducting interviews again. The archive will be expanded, as will the potentials for future tracings. Friendships have resulted from interviews, messiness is encountered in more-or-less spontaneous utterances that would not manifest quite like this in written statements; but this is the messiness of material reality, a messiness that I think the most interesting writing and musics should aspire to confront and harness.

7 Literature

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Abstract (English)

This diploma thesis attempts to trace political potentials and engagement with power relations in heterogeneous, dynamic, socially constituted underground music scenes in the USA ('free folk', according to Keenan and Valentine). It is part of a larger project and was preceded by a political science thesis on gender construction / gender relations in these fields. The new thesis builds on its predecessor's theoretical and methodological elaborations. History is conceptualized (via Foucault) as fragmented, constructed, non-linear. My approach to the field of research can be understood as analogous to Branden W. Joseph's 'minor history' (inspired by Foucault, Kelley, Deleuze and Guattari), tracing the local, trans-local and virtual scenes (Bennett and Peterson) in question according to "specific networks and connections" (Joseph). Qualitative, problem-centered interviews conducted with (mostly) musicians from these scenes in 2009 were open enough to remain the project's main materials. However, they are supplemented by more recent, theme-specific email exchanges with interviewees as well as additional literature that, in comparison to the first thesis, moves to the foreground.

In fact, three key texts provide concepts and inspiration for the thesis's main chapters. Revisiting Branden W. Joseph's *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, I first examine a series of options for the writing of a history of these scenes and tackle numerous aspects that would have to be examined in a minor history of these scenes or its protagonists. Joseph's own tracing of Tony Conrad's trajectory through artistic-social fields in the late 1950s and early 1960s yields a variety of intriguing analyses of artists' engagement with the legacy of John Cage as well as shifting relations and forms of power. I apply some of the implications of Cage's work as traced by Joseph to the psychedelic / drone / noise musicians I am writing about. I argue that some of the chief issues struggled about at the time have been internalized by these musicians whose experimental music, or often 'improvised sound work' (Russell) is practiced on a folk-like, friendly basis of like-mindedness. Following this, I discuss the implications of some musicians' interest in personal 'worlds' and go on to trace artists' potentials in dealing with sovereign, disciplinary and control power. Whereas these scenes' ahierarchic organization clearly opposes sovereign power, numerous examples for a difficult engagement with discipline are presented, and a plea for a harnessing of psychedelic / irreducible, perception-altering aesthetics against normalizing control closes the chapter.

Nadya Zimmerman's critique of the San Francisco counterculture isn't so much applied to the scenes at hand but rather triggers elaborations on a variety of themes. Still close to the book's own interests, 'illegitimate' (Keenan) DIY culture's quasi-outlaw status is investigated. Inspired by Zimmerman's discussion of the Grateful Dead's improvised moments, I contrast two decidedly political approaches towards improvised musics (Russell's and Gilbert's) and go on to argue via the latter's *Anticapitalism and Culture* that the potentially powerful tactics of 'improvised sound work' might best be harnessed into an alliance that doesn't approach society as a totality. A discussion of Yellow Swans' 'Psychedelic anarchism' leads me to propose a materialist approach to the (artistic) altering of perception. Zimmerman's critique of the counterculture's contradictions make me trace 'free folk' scenes' fragile relation to capitalism, again especially via Gilbert and Keenan, resulting in a careful praise of DIY economics and a plea for communal innovation at times of major shifts in the music industry.

Mark Gridley criticizes (in his view) unfounded proclamations of links between 1960s free jazz musics and the civil rights movement. Partially inspired by his text and Brian Harker's criticism thereof, I discuss musicians' views of the articulation or disarticulation of these musics and politics. Obvious connections between these scenes and the political landscape of the early 21st century USA aren't pre-given, though broader as well as more detailed analysis, using appropriate tools, might be able to trace connections between the perceived emergence of such a strong accumulation of scenes and Bush-era politics. While political awareness is present, actual political activity is less so; the attitude that 'the personal is the political' seems quite prolific. Still, some interviewees have either been politically active or have engaged with politics aesthetically, though rarely overtly so. Christina Carter is disillusioned by tendencies towards "flatness", disinterest and the creation of products rather than the deeply human approach she strives for; I connect this perception of an undifferentiated, blissfully powerless field to Mark Fisher's concept of 'capitalist realism'. This is a seemingly static societal situation that I think these scenes' artists are well-equipped to challenge, at least once the various potentials of highly creative 'possible worlds' (Lazzarato), collective improvisation, psychedelic altering of perception, DIY ethics and economics and the scenes' general openness are articulated to broader alliances or (via Gilbert) (non-repressive) strategies.

Abstract (deutsch)

Diese Diplomarbeit versucht, politische Potentiale und Umgang mit Machtverhältnissen in heterogenen, dynamischen, sozial konstituierten Underground-Musik-Szenen (‚*free folk*', laut Keenan und Valentine) in den USA nachzuziehen. Sie ist Teil eines größeren Projektes und folgt einer Politikwissenschafts-Arbeit über Geschlechterkonstruktion / Geschlechterverhältnisse in diesen Feldern. Die neue Arbeit baut auf deren theoretischen und methodologischen Ausführungen auf. Geschichte wird (via Foucault) als fragmentiert, konstruiert, non-linear konzeptualisiert. Mein Zugang zum Forschungsfeld kann als analog zu Branden W. Josephs ‚*minor history*' (inspiriert von Foucault, Kelley, Deleuze und Guattari) verstanden werden. Ich ziehe die lokalen, trans-lokalen und virtuellen Szenen (Bennett und Peterson) anhand von „*specific networks and connections*" (Joseph) nach. Qualitative, problemzentrierte Interviews, die ich 2009 (großteils) mit Musiker_innen geführt habe, können durch ihre Offenheit weiterhin das Hauptmaterial des Projekts bleiben. Allerdings werden sie durch aktuellere, themenspezifische Email-Konversationen mit Interviewten sowie im Vergleich zur ersten Arbeit in den Vordergrund rückender zusätzlicher Literatur ergänzt.
Drei Schlüsseltexte stellen Konzept und Inspiration für die drei Hauptkapitel der Arbeit zur Verfügung. Von Josephs *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* ausgehend starte ich mit Ausführungen über mögliche Geschichtsschreibung solcher Szenen und gehe auf verschiedene Aspekte ein, die in einer *minor history* dieser Szenen oder ihrer Protagonist_innen besprochen werden müssten. Josephs eigenes Nachziehen von Tony Conrads Weg durch künstlerisch-soziale Felder der späten 1950er und frühen 1960er Jahre resultiert in interessanten Analysen künstlerischer Auseinandersetzung mit John Cages Erbe und sich wandelnden Machtverhältnissen und -formen. Implikationen von Cages Werk werden auf die hier besprochenen *psychedelic*- / *drone*- / *noise*-Szenen angewandt. Ich argumentiere, dass damals umstrittene Thematiken von diesen aktuellen Musiker_innen internalisiert wurden. Ihr experimentelles, oft ‚*improvised sound work*' (Russell) wird auf einer *folk*-artigen, freundlichen Basis der Gleichgesinntheit praktiziert. In der Folge bespreche ich die Implikationen des Interesses einiger Musiker_innen an persönlichen ‚Welten' sowie künstlerische Potentiale im Umgang mit souveräner Macht, Disziplinar- und Kontrollmacht. Die ahierarchische Organisation dieser Szenen steht gegen souveräne Macht; Beispiele für komplexen Umgang mit Disziplin werden präsentiert; schließlich plädiere ich für eine Mobilisierung

psychedelischer / nicht reduzierbarer, perzeptionsverändernder Ästhetik gegen normalisierende Kontrolle.

Nadya Zimmermans Kritik der *counterculture* von San Francisco löst Besprechungen verschiedener Themen aus. Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem quasi-*outlaw*-Status ‚illegitimer' (Keenan) *Do It Yourself* (DIY)-Kultur ist noch an Zimmerman orientiert, während ich in Folge ihrer Ausführungen zu den improvisierten Momenten der Grateful Dead zwei dezidiert politische Zugänge zu improvisierten Musiken (Russell und Gilbert) kontrastiere. Anhand von Gilberts *Anticapitalism and Culture* argumentiere ich, dass die potenziell kraftvollen Taktiken des ‚*improvised sound work*' am Besten in einer Allianz mobilisiert werden, die die Gesellschaft nicht als Totalität versteht. Eine Besprechung des ‚Psychedelischen Anarchismus' der Yellow Swans mündet in den Vorschlag eines materialistischen Zugangs zur künstlerischen Perzeptionsveränderung, und Zimmermans Kritik der Widersprüche der *counterculture* lässt mich das fragile Verhältnis der ‚*free folk*'-Szenen zu Kapitalismus besprechen, vor allem via Gilbert und Keenan. Dies endet in einem vorsichtigen Lob von DIY-Wirtschaft und einer Bitte um gemeinschaftliche Innovation in einer Zeit musikindustrieller Umwälzungen.

Mark Gridley kritisiert die Verknüpfung von *free jazz*-Musik der 1960er und der Bürgerrechtsbewegung. Anschließend an diesen Text und seine Kritik durch Brian Harker bespreche ich die Ansichten von Musiker_innen zu vorhandenen oder nicht vorhandenen Verbindungen zwischen solcher DIY-Musik und Politik. Offensichtliche Verknüpfungen sind nicht vorgegeben, doch breitere und detailliertere Analyse könnte (Nicht-)Verbindungen zwischen der Politik der Bush-Jahre und der Herkunft solcher Szenen folgen. Politisches Bewusstsein ist präsent, politische Aktivität weniger, immer wieder ist ‚das Persönliche' ‚das Politische'. Manche Interviewte waren durchaus politisch aktiv oder haben sich ästhetisch mit Politik auseinander gesetzt, doch selten offensichtlich. Christina Carter ist von Tendenzen zu Desinteresse, Undifferenziertheit und der Produktion von Produkten anstelle des ihr wichtigen menschlichen Zugangs desillusioniert. Diesen Eindruck eines solchen undifferenzierten Feldes verknüpfe ich mit Mark Fishers Konzept des ‚*capitalist realism*'. Ich denke, dass die Musiker_innen dieser Szenen eine solche vermeintlich statische Situation gut herausfordern können – zumindest, wenn die verschiedenen Potenziale kreativer ‚möglicher Welten' (Lazzarato), kollektiver Improvisation, psychedelischer Perzeptionsveränderung, der DIY-Ethik und –Ökonomie sowie die allgemeine Offenheit der Szenen zu breiteren Allianzen oder (nichtrepressiven) Strategien (Gilbert) verknüpft werden.

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